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# NIGHT NURSE

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# NIGHT NURSE

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BY DORA MACY
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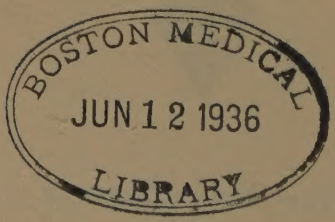


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DEDICATED TO

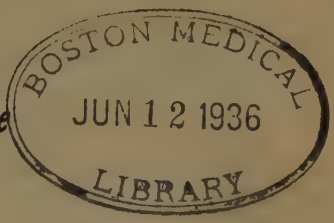
*My very patient husband!*

# *Foreword*

*Those who read my book,* Ex-Mistress, *will remember that twice I was ill in a hospital — once when I had my baby, and once when I parted with my appendix. Upon this last occasion, I found a new and interesting friend in my night nurse ( who has since attended me at home during my second accouchement! )*

*This book is her story — based on her own experiences and the histories of other nurses she has known. Names, places, locale and circumstances have been completely altered for obvious reasons.*

# Chapter One




I've just come off a case, and I don't think I'll ever be a night nurse again. I'll never be a nurse of any kind.

In my long career of batting from place to place, I've been able to hang on to my nerves pretty well. After the first hundred shocks, nothing really got under my skin. You get hardened to things. A nurse, you see, deals closely with abnormalities of all sorts. Normal people are perfectly well and healthy. As a rule. But when you get into a hospital, or into the world of sickness it's like getting into a foreign world. Different customs, rules, conventions, habits — an entirely different outlook on life.

Healthy people seldom realize this. They don't stop to think of it. For me, the world is divided into three parts: the sick, the well, and those who take care of the sick. The world I live in is apt to be pretty much of a chamber of horrors. A world of the neurotic. Yet, after a while, you don't think of it that way. It just *is*, and you accept it as a matter of actual fact that must be dealt with. There it is,

and there you are, and you do what you can. Which is very little, because so much depends upon the patient.

Maybe you've been sick, and maybe you know what I'm talking about. You're bound to be sick sometime, one of your days. At some point, your life will be hanging in the balance, and very, very often it is utterly in the hands of your surgeon, your doctor, or your nurse. Perhaps most frequently in the hands of your night nurse—who is all you have to depend upon in the small hours of early morning when no other help is about.

The way your night nurse treats you is one story. That goes for the entire medical profession, really. The way you treat your night nurse is an entirely different story. A good sixty per cent of much of the trouble and shame comes from the way you treat your nurses and doctors. After all, we have to take you as you are. We never know when we open the door of a sick room what we're going to face. We have to take care of white and black, mean and nice, generous, suspicious, Christian, pagan, Jew, foreign, cultured, illiterate, murderers, saints, or degenerates. It's never you that counts. It's your lungs and heart and pulse and blood and bones and organs. That's all we care about. Or rather, that's all we're supposed to care about.

Sometimes, you can't help caring. That's just what's the matter with me. I've made the fatal mistake of taking a case to heart. It was a peculiar case. But, though I'm practically ruined now in my career, I wouldn't have done any different, if I had to face it all over again. Not a bit dif-

ferent. Because I don't care if my career is ruined. The career is ruined for me. I've lost my taste for it. But it makes me feel like a lost child must feel. I don't know what to do with myself. I've always loved nursing. It's been my life. But I swear I could never face it again. I've been through ten years of shocks that sent me off the handle, good and proper. I'm bursting with a great festering pent-up indignation, and I feel if I don't talk to somebody I'll go mad. I've been pussying with "ethics" and "professional reticence" and *silence* long enough.

Now I'm going to talk.

In two weeks a case will come up in court that will probably blackball me from any hospital in the country. I don't care. I'm going through with it. Because I'm that kind of a fool.

One night last November I was sent out on a new case. I didn't dream it was really going to be my Waterloo!

It sounded like a cinch. Two little girls, daughters of a famous millionaire, had been at the St. George Hospital for two months suffering from malnutrition. It was feared it would develop into pernicious anemia. But they had fixed the babies up ( they were only seven and eight years old ) and sent them back to their millionaire home. I had been in the hospital at the time on a diabetic case, and had known the two little Richey kids — and liked them.

The kids were sent home, practically cured, and that was supposed to be the end of that.

After my diabetic case, I was put on an alcoholic, with whom I went home after he had stepped out of it. I was

with him for five nights. He was a beast. I left the case in a huff and went back to the hospital to give the Superintendent a polite piece of my mind.

She told me then of the Richey kids. Strange as it might be, they had evidently got worse since they had gone back to their millionaire home. Their twenty-four-hour nurse was being changed to a day and night nurse. It was a fine berth. Did I want to take it?

Sure I did. It sounded fine, and I liked those two little kids. I always like kids. I don't see why they should ever get sick and have to suffer. It's mean.

I went over to the Richey home that evening at six forty-five. I was supposed to do from 7 P.M to 7 A.M. I found it was a stupendous roof apartment — simplex — the kind that is like a private house built in a big building. Stairs, and porches, and roof garden and everything. I had been in one before, when I took care of Rex Ronnald, the theatrical producer, so I didn't gasp at the sight of its beautiful eighteen rooms.

The day nurse met me as soon as a flunky let me in the doors. She took me to the kids' rooms. They had a suite. A huge bedroom with two little beautiful beds side by side, one all done in pink sheets, and one all done in blue sheets and blankets. They had a sitting room off it, which had the tiniest piano I had ever seen — about as high as my elbow. A bathroom, and a tiny kitchen all to themselves, and a big awninged porch.

The Richey kids were sitting up in their little beds as the day nurse brought me in.

"Oh! Oh!" cried the smallest in a very little voice. Her name was Nannette and they called her Nanny.

"Gee, it's Miss Hart. Hello, Miss Hart, how's your beau?"

The bigger one called that out to me, and held up her arms. So I went over to kiss her and tell her my beau was fine and I had come to make her all well again. Her name was Desney, Lord knows why.

Both kids hugged and kissed me. But I could see right away how weak they were, and I wouldn't let them become excited. Their condition puzzled me — and frightened me a bit.

I got loose from them very quickly, and went in with the day nurse to the kids' sitting room. I knew the day nurse quite well. Maloney, of the St. George Hospital. I had worked with her often on cases. It made me realize that the case must be important, for the Superintendent always teamed us up when something special was on foot. Maloney and I worked together like a charm.

We talked as we began to peel off. She got out of her uniform and into her street clothes. I did vice versa. She was showing me things, right and left, in between our conversation. Where this was and where I'd find that. We talked in very low voices. From habit. Besides, we knew each other's facial expressions.

"Those kids are gonners," she said first off.

"Don't look like it," I frowned.

"Anemia! They had an undergrad here as a twenty-four-hour nurse," she went on in a practical monotone. "Know what she did? Gave them each a sleeping tablet

so they'd sleep and she could go out. Did it regular. Sometimes twice a day. She knew about how long they'd sleep and she'd go shopping."

"Oh, the scum!" I muttered vehemently, and glanced toward the closed door that shut off the two little kids. We could hear their voices, quite shrill and excited.

"How long was she on? Is Dr. Ranger still on the case?" I asked. Flung out both questions as I pulled my street dress over my head.

Maloney looked up from putting on black stockings over her white uniform ones.

"She was here five weeks. Yeh, Dr. Ranger is back on the case. He knows. But of course he wouldn't say anything. They were fools to get an undergrad in the first place. He'll bar her from St. George. That's all."

"Yeh? Well, if I know anything, she'll never finish training!" I flared. "The dirty bum to dope up kids like that."

"You won't do anything about it. What good will it do? You only *think* you'll kick up dust."

I shut up and combed my hair. Maloney was right. I wouldn't tell. For years, I wouldn't tell. Never, never tell.

"What does Ranger say?" I asked after I had pinned on my cap.

"Back to the same old routine. He hopes to pull them out without bringing them back to the hospital. He doesn't *say* anything."

I sighed. Of course, Dr. Ranger wouldn't say anything. They never do. Never, never say anything....

"This house is queer" Maloney half whispered presently.

"Yeh?"

"Yeh. I've been here three days, and haven't seen a soul but a servant called Maxwell. A woman the kids don't like. Sort of housekeeper, I guess. She'll bring you up your food and leave it in that ice-box there. She won't say a word to you."

"Where's the kids' mother?"

"Gallivanting most of the time, I guess. She lives here, but I never see her. The kids see her once or twice a day. Maxwell takes them in to see their mother to say good-night each evening. Sometimes when the mother wakes for breakfast, too. Around noon. But I've never been in there and never have seen her. Maxwell takes them in *separately,* too. Maxwell is off to-day. The kids cry when they don't go in to see their mother."

I thought about this as I tied my white shoes, and folded up my street things and hung my coat on a rack. I knew the kids' father was dead.

Maloney was all dressed and itching to go.

"Did you write out everything?" I asked.

"Yup. You'll find the list on the ice-box. The kids get warm milk as often as they wake up. Their feet are always cold. Don't use a hot water bag unless you have to. Their poor feet are pulps from them already. Massage them. They have bad dreams. If they have terrible cramps give them paregoric. Ranger said okey, if necessary. They get hysterical...."

A few moments later, I walked down the corridor of

the swell-smelling apartment and said good-by to Maloney at the door. She had a date with her oculist chap. Anxious to get away.

I went back to the kids. They had already eaten their supper. They seemed awfully glad to see me — and far from sleepy. Excited. Awfully high-strung babies. I began to massage them — body massage. Told them stories as I worked over them. I got them and their beds all fixed up fresh, and then began to promise things if they'd go right to sleep.

The kids seemed thrilled at seeing me again. They were asking millions of questions about the hospital. The St. George had evidently left a vivid impression on them. They asked after Dr. Langley, and Miss Carr, and Miss Finch, and the man who had been in the room next to theirs with an appendix. I had to explain about an appendix.

"Well," I said, at last, "it's time you got to sleep. I understand your Miss Maxwell is out."

"Mrs. Maxwell," corrected Desney quickly. "M for Maxwell."

"D for Desney," I answered, which was what the kid always expected you to say.

"H for Hart," she said excitedly. It was a game. "What's your first name, Miss Hart?"

"L for Lora," I told her.

"Lora!"

The little one sat up in bed with a scramble.

"Lora!" she repeated after Desney. "We had a sister once named Laura."

"She died," added Desney.

"She died terrible," the tiny one explained, a rush of blood coming to her forehead.

"Listen," I cut in. "My name is really..."

"She was runned over," Desney told me, beating her hands on the pink comforter. "She was out with her governess, and she was only eight and she was runned over...."

"She was all cut up," Nanny's eyes got big.

She began to cry. I went over and took her in my arms. I started to talk to them. Desney didn't cry. She never cried. Little Nanny was always crying. I told them that their sister Laura hadn't been all cut up, but they insisted that she had. So I told them she was all mended now, and well, and pretty and in heaven. I told them what heaven was like, with crayons and paints and soap bubbles and Raggedy Anns....I promised to let them blow soap bubbles when they woke up. But they must get to sleep now.... Besides my name wasn't Laura at all. It was Anna.

"Oh, no," Desney shook her head firmly. "It's Laura, or you wouldn't have said so. I'm sure."

"Well, I bet I spell my name different from your sister," I assured her. "My name is spelled Lora. L—O—R—A."

"That's funny," Desney decided. "I got a funny name too. I hate funny names. I hate funny names. I wish my name was Mary or Kitty...."

"I'll call you Kitty," I offered.

"Why is your name spelled funny?" She was insistent upon the subject.

"I don't know. Maybe it's because I'm Canadian," I laughed.

"What's that?" Desney wanted to know.

So I told them about Canada. I told them what a dear place Quebec was. How I had been a little girl there. I got kind of lonesome for it as I talked. I had never been able to afford going back. I was only thirteen when my widowed mother married an American and came to this country. A few years later she left me with a rooming house lady in Astoria, Long Island, and ran off with another man. My stepfather never came near me — would have nothing to do with me.... I used to cry and wish I could get back to Quebec.... The only happy times I've ever remembered were there....

But my memories were cut short as Desney broke in to tell me about another sister she had. I was surprised, because they had never spoken about her while they were in the hospital. This sister was almost fifteen years old, and her name was Juanita, and they hadn't seen her for ages and ages, not last Christmas nor the one before that. She was in boarding school and never wrote them. They showed me an old picture of her, and she seemed a beauty. Much more so than either of these two kids could ever have been.

We heard noises not so far away, and voices. I saw a light of excitement come into Desney's eyes at the sounds.

"Listen," I said. "You two have got to get to sleep or you'll never get well."

"I don't want to get well," Desney objected. "I'd like to get worse and go back to the hospital. Nanny would too."

"That's Mummy," cried Nanny suddenly, listening to the voices not far away. She began to cry.

"Yes, that's Mummy," Desney said excitedly. "I wonder if she's going on a party again. I hope she'll wear her ermine. I'd like to see her in her ermine, wouldn't you, Nanny? I wish she'd come in. Nanny, I wish she'd come in...."

"If you promise to go to sleep," I stood up suddenly with an idea, "I'll take you in to say good-night to your Mummy!"

"Oh, *no!*"

The quick sharp objection from Desney made me shudder. I didn't know why.

Nanny began to cry, and buried her head in her pillow. I looked at her desperately. The poor little morsel had bald patches in the thin wispy strands of her brown hair.... Back in my mind I decided I'd rub them with vaseline, and massage the head....

"Why not?" I asked Desney. "Would your mother be cross if you went in to say good-night?"

Desney's eyes got jumpy with excitement. She leaned forward, in her little bed, and crooked her finger to me. I went closer, because she obviously wanted to whisper to me.

"We mustn't go in there," she told me breathlessly. "Not unless Mrs. Maxwell takes us in."

Nanny was crying worse. I started to go over to her, but Desney pulled me by the sleeve. I could see the kid was bursting with agitation. Nanny was only crying, but *this* kid . . . !

I sat down on the edge of her pink comforter. I leaned closer. Both her hands were grasping my arms now.

"We went in the other night — ourselves," Desney's words strangled each other in their haste to come out. "We'll never do it again. We were screamed at and thrown right out . . . Nanny was so scared. So was I, but I don't be such a baby. . . . You know what, Miss Hart?"

"No, what, Desney?"

"Mummy sleeps with Uncle Phil in there. She does — most all the time."

Nanny stopped crying suddenly, and turned to listen, whimpering softly.

"Desney — you're silly —"

"No, I'm not. I've seen them," the kid nodded her head vigorously. "So has Nanny. We've been home from the hospital a long time now, and we hardly ever see Uncle Phil, but we hear his voice a lot, and Mummy laughing. . . . But the other night we went in to say good-night to Mummy by ourselves, and we opened the door of Mummy's room, and we saw Uncle Phil. And he had on just only his pajamas . . ."

". . . and he was in bed and so was Mummy . . ." put in Nanny, wide-eyed.

"...and he sat up and yelled at us and called us names. He called us..."

I put my hand over Desney's mouth. I started to speak, but Nanny was ahead of me.... She leaned over from her blue sheets, still whimpering.

"He started to make after us, and we turned and *ranned!*"

"Nanny, lie back! You'll catch cold! Lie back there."

The kid slumped back, and began to cry worse than ever. Desney was tugging at my uniform sleeve.

"I'll tell you, Miss Hart, they were mad! Mummy hasn't spoken to us since.... We haven't seen her, and..."

"Listen, Desney! It was very wrong of you to go in there like that. But you're mistaken, child. I'm sure your Uncle Phil is..."

"I'm *not* wrong. I saw him!" insisted Desney.

There was no answer I could think of to the stare of the eight-year-old child's eyes. I disengaged her hand and stood up, gathering some severity.

"That's nothing," Desney added breathlessly. "I've seen our chauffeur, too. Lots. He's a big, big man, and he..."

"Child, what are you saying?" I cried.

Nanny began to sob in earnest. Her wails became loud and prolonged. She was all scrunched up with the pillow over her head. I went around to her, glad of something that meant action. I closed the windows, and picked Nanny up in my arms. The child was a deal. She held on to me, scratching me, though she didn't know it, and kicking and crying...

"He comes in here lots," Desney went on hoarsely. She was sitting bolt upright and her eyes were glued on me, and she was going to tell me or burst. I threw her a desperate glance, as I sat down with Nanny and drew a blanket around her quivering form.

"He comes in here, when nobody's around, and he puts on that little lamp, and he..."

"What *are* you talking about?" I snapped, my eyes blazing.

"Our chauffeur — Nick. I get so scared. Nanny does too. When we wake up at night, sometimes, and we see him leaning over our bed, breathing a lot... and once when I woke up and saw him like that, he put his hand right over my mouth and told me not to make a noise... and once he just laughed at both of us, and went right out of the room, but he left the light on; and he told us once if we dared to tell Mrs. Maxwell..."

"Keep quiet!" I commanded sternly. "Keep quiet, Desney. Can't you see you're upsetting Nanny dreadfully? And you'll work yourself up into a fever. Don't you say another word. You hear?"

Nanny had indeed become uncontrollable at this recital from Desney's dry trembling lips. I got up and walked with her out into the tiny kitchen. I knew Nanny would tire of her fit presently; she hadn't much strength. I reached into the ice-chest and thanked fate for a small loose chunk of ice. With one hand I took it out, slammed the ice-chest door, and wrapped the ice in a towel hanging over the sink. I carried Nanny back to the nursery. Sat in a

chair with her, and talked to her. Crossly, for the most part. It was what would snap her out of it quickest. I rubbed her head with the ice. Her head and her burning cheeks and lips. Her kicking stopped, but her sobs went on tearing at the tiny lungs....

My head was going round and round. I couldn't believe. ...God knows, I'd seen and heard enough horror....But kids like these — worth millions — with a fine home and every comfort....A chauffeur who came in to scare and horrify them! A mother who...It made me feel wormy.

Desney was still sitting stiff upright, still watching me with big eyes.

I looked over at her and tried to find the right words.

"Do you ever sleep with a man, Miss Hart?"

The question took me down a peg.

"Listen here, Desney," I made my voice as firm and sharp as I could. I felt Nanny snuggled close to my shoulder and it made me feel safer. "You're talking nonsense. Just pure nonsense. You've had bad dreams, that's what. I don't know where you ever got such ideas. But it's just bad dreams, that's all."

"It wasn't dreams," Desney shook her head firmly. "Nanny saw it too."

"She's been having bad dreams," I insisted. "You've both been having bad dreams. Miss Maloney told me you both wake up with bad dreams. Isn't that so? You know it is. Dreams are funny things. People dream of impossible and most peculiar things. Things that couldn't happen. You must just forget dreams. They aren't real. Sometimes they

seem so real you're *sure* they've happened. I had a dream like that once."

"Did you?" Desney looked at me hopefully.

"I had a dream about a big rat. I sure did. A terrible big rat. And a..."

"Did the rat breathe hard?" Desney wanted to know terribly.

"No! No, of course not. What I mean was, I dreamed the rat ate up all my flowers. I have flowers in a window box in my room...." Nanny stirred. She looked at me from under swollen baby eyes. I put the ice away. "I have beautiful flowers," I went on. "Some geraniums, and some marigold...."

"Got any sweet peas?" Desney demanded.

"Oh, sure, I love sweet peas."

"So do I," nodded Desney. "What else you got?"

"I'll bring you some sweet peas to-morrow night," I told them grandly.

"You will?" Desney s eyes grew softer.

"Pink ones," Nanny tore out of her throat.

"Umm. I like pink ones best too." I smiled down on her. "Will you drink a little milk for me? I'll drink some too. We'll all have a party together...."

"Have you got any pansies?" Desney thought to ask.

"Oh, sure. I got the grandest pansies, with the funniest little faces...."

"Will you bring some pansies, too?" Nanny sat up in my arms.

"Of course." I began to wonder how much pansies would cost in November.

"I'd like to have window boxes," sighed Desney. "Nanny would, too. Wouldn't you like to have window boxes, Nanny? With flowers to grow?"

Nanny's swollen red-raw eyes turned toward Desney, and caught something of the interest of her older sister.

"Yes," she decided. "I want some window boxes and some milk."

"Good," I decided, and carried her over to the bed. "Now you cover up and I'm going to get you some nice milk, and we'll all have some hot milk and crackers together, and we'll plan the window boxes, and we won't ever have bad dreams again...."

"It wasn't dreams..." began Desney.

"Do you like salt in your milk?" I cut in on her.

"Yes, but no butter. I hate it with butter. Nanny hates it with butter too. Like we hate raw eggs. You wouldn't give us raw eggs would you, Miss Hart?"

"Could I have orchids in my window box like Mummy wears?"

"I don't think so." I drew the line there firmly.

"Just sweet peas and pansies."

"And geraniums."

"They're red."

"Pink sometimes, too."

"Nanny, you grow the pansies, and I'll grow the sweet peas...." I left Desney directing her sister, both of them talking, while I went into the kitchen, and prepared a

tray of the hot milk, very creamy, and saltines. I saw some applesauce in the ice-box and fixed it on two saucers in the hopes the kids might eat some.

When I came back we had the "party" together. Nanny drank only a little of the milk. Desney drank all of hers, but ate nothing. We heard sounds again.

"That's Mummy. I'm sure she's going on a party," Desney remarked, her eyes staring at the door. "Uncle Phil is away. On business. Do you know that, Miss Hart? I don't know when he'll be back. I hope it will be a long time. I'd rather he didn't come back at all. I'd rather he got runned over, and all cut up...."

The sounds got louder. We kept silence, somehow, all three of us, as the children's mother was very evidently going directly past their door and down the corridor. It was almost half-past eight, by my wrist watch.

Desney sighed profoundly as the sound of the mother's voice faded out of hearing. I wondered if we were alone in the apartment now....

But I broke in quickly about how long it took to grow sweet peas.... Just to get them both thinking of other things....

They began to grow sleepier and I put out all but one light. They couldn't stand being in the dark. I sat quite still, holding Nanny's hand. My wrist began to ache from the funny position...

"Miss Hart," Desney said drowsily.

"Yes, dear?"

"Do you know how to sing?"

"Not much."

"Couldn't you sing at all?"

"Maybe. I might."

"Do you know how to play the piano?"

"No. I wish I did."

"I wish I did, too," sighed Desney and turned on her back to look straight at me.

"Go to sleep now, Desney."

"All right....Daddy knew how to play the piano. Mummy doesn't. But Daddy did. He used to come in and play the piano all the time for us, at nights when we were going to bed...."

"How lovely. Go to sleep now, Desney."

"He used to play that little piano we have in there. He got it for us, and he used to call it 'Ajax'....Funny to name a piano, wasn't it?"

"Very funny. You're disturbing Nanny, I think, honey. We'd better not talk any more now. We're only allowed so many words a day, and you've used yours all up. Let's go to sleep."

"But I wish you could sing, Miss Hart....Daddy used to sing for us every night. He sang Daffy-Down-Dilly...."

"I don't know Daffy-Down-Dilly."

"Don't you know any songs at all?"

"Not many. I'm not a hand at singing, much."

"He used to sing *'Es blüht ein schönes Blümchen.'* That's a German song. He loved German songs, and I do too. Nanny remembers. I remember most of the words. I could teach it to you...."

"To-morrow night — I'd love to learn it."

"Mummy hates anything German, but I don't, and Nanny doesn't, either. Daddy was mostly German. He went to school in Germany, and he loved German things. I love German things, too. I could teach you.... It goes..."

"Not now, Desney, darling. I'm too sleepy to learn German. You can teach me all the songs to-morrow."

"But wouldn't you know any songs at all, Miss Hart? Even a little one? Couldn't you remember a single song, because I don't need the piano, just if you could even sing...."

Nanny, mouse-quiet, was staring up at me. Both pairs of kids' eyes were staring at me. There was something urgent in the tiniest one's eyes.

"Well, I might remember one." I relented. "But only if you go right to sleep."

"Right to sleep," promised Desney soulfully.

"Right after the song," Nanny spoke for the first time.

I began. I have a rummy voice. I don't ever sing. I don't remember the words of things anyway. But I sang a little song I used to know, only I didn't remember all the words....

*All aboard for Blanket Bay...*
*Won't come back till the break of day...*
*Dum-de-dum — de-da white sheet...*
*Dum-edum-de, dadle dee dee....*
*Tuck him up in his trundle bed...*
*Till you can't dee-dee dadle dee-dee....*

Desney's eyes fluttered closed. I sang the thing over and over. Nanny's hands relaxed on mine.

After a little, I got up and went out to the sitting room. I tried to think over things. I am a peaceful person by nature, but these two little kids had worked me up into a fury for them.... The more I thought of what they had been through.... What kind of mother could it be? Millions, they had! Millions — one of the biggest businesses in the country. Oil, as I remembered it.... And the father dead, and the mother "gallivanting" with the Uncle Phil. ... And that beast of a chauffeur! Did nobody watch over the kids, that such a thing could happen? Didn't their Mrs. Maxwell watch them? Didn't anybody really love them, or care? Evidently not, or they wouldn't have been sent to a hospital for malnutrition, with all their money! The doctor had hinted that they didn't get proper care at home. ... Imagine! Millionaire kids, who couldn't get proper care at home! ... I wondered if I should tell their mother about the chauffeur.... Surely, she would care about that.... Surely, she'd want to know, and surely, she'd do something. ... Even if she was a high-flier and "slept with Uncle Phil"; surely, she would realize that a man like that chauffeur ought to be arrested....

I swore softly to myself that I wouldn't leave the kids — ever! Not until they were well and strong and away from here.... I had a dreadful feeling....

While I washed up the milk glasses and put things away I tried not to think any more about it. What business was it of mine? Except that the forlorn, half-starved little kids

got under my skin so. For years I had been close to terrible stories. Heart-rending stories. Unbelievable stories. Unpreventable tragedies. Tragedies I could have prevented by a single word. Only nurses are not allowed a single word. They learn to keep their mouths shut. None of their business. Meddlers never tolerated.... I couldn't meddle now. But I could keep the kids' door bolted against the entrance of the chauffeur. I could do a few things....

I tidied up the room. I read over all of Maloney's directions. Looked at the fitful chart the damned undergrad had kept, and cursed her to hell for having doped the kids. ...And looked over what Dr. Ranger had ordered. Dr. Ranger was not the best doctor in the world. At first the kids had Dr. Beaston on their case. Dr. Beaston is the best in the city. Dr. Beaston is a man I respect, and I've seen him going on ten years on one case after another. But Dr. Beaston was too good. He had been dismissed, and they got this Dr. Ranger, who was all right, but I didn't ever like or trust him. It looked sour to me, right from the start —that change! Something peculiar in it. Something peculiar in keeping the kids in the apartment in the first place instead of ordering them out into the country sunshine. Dr. Beaston had said they were to go to the country as soon as they left the St. George Hospital. Dr. Ranger was all right, of course.... But his orders, as I read them, didn't amount to a damn.... It looked to me as if nobody cared if the kids died....

I got myself something to eat. Fixed some coffee and found a plate of cold food which I warmed in the oven.

Nurses are supposed to get three meals a night; but they very seldom get anything worth hollering about. I only got gorgeously fed once in my career as a night nurse. That was at Rex Ronnald's, the theatrical producer's.... Night was pretty much his daytime, like myself....

Back in the kids' room, I wrapped a blanket around me, took off my cap, and snuggled in a big chair. The little one began crying in her sleep. I got unsnuggled, and put some alcohol on her head. She had wet the bed. I picked her up and carried her into the bathroom. Fixed and cleaned her. She didn't cry any more. She put her arms around my neck. They were so thin, those arms.... I wrapped her up warm, and changed her bed clean. I was glad Desney didn't wake. Desney was the difficult one to manage, because Desney's mind was clicking a mile a minute, and there was nothing that ever got by her, and she talked your ear off.

Nanny got back to bed nice and good for me. I offered her some warm milk, but she didn't take it. The poor tot was asleep almost as soon as she hit the pillow.

I wrapped up in the blanket again, and cuddled up in the big chair. I dozed off.

Desney — calling out and yelling — woke me up around one o'clock. She had a nightmare. She woke up Nanny, of course, who cried for all she was worth. Desney's nightmare was terrible. She beat at me. She bit my hand. I pushed her back on the bed and held her shoulders down. I tried to make her hear me over her screams. I couldn't. I gave her some aromatic spirits of ammonia. She gave up for about fifteen minutes and then started in again. Raving.

I took her into the bathroom, but Lord, she fought me like a demon. I put her into some cold water. It quieted her immediately. I got her back to bed and massaged her with oil. Getting up the circulation. I fed them both some soup which I had found in the ice-chest and which I heated up. I sang to them all over again. They went to sleep. Without paregoric, which was what I wanted. Desney tossed fitfully, but at last she slept. Nanny tried to keep her head under her pillow, and I kept taking it off for fear she'd start to smother on me.

It was nearly three when they were finally off, and I could curl up in the chair again, wrapped in a blanket. I felt tired and shaken. Such nightmares were not for kids....

On most average cases, I can get from four to seven hours' sleep during the night. I hadn't gotten any sleep on the alcoholic case that I had been on for five nights just before this one. He was a slimy beast, anyway. I hadn't wanted to fall asleep. I had drunk coffee deliberately to keep awake. I felt pretty tired now. And even though I wasn't exactly calm, I dozed off in the chair.

The next I heard was a commotion that made me spring out of the chair like a cat. A scream that pierced the hand-painted ceiling. And somebody laughing. A man's laugh — with loud words in between that I couldn't hear....

I put on one of the bigger lights. I felt a bit scared. There was a clock on the mantel that caught my eye — a clock that was made like a soldier said it was four-thirty A.M. I remember thinking suddenly what a cute clock it

was... obviously German... obviously something their Daddy had given them.... He must have loved the kids, anyway.... He must have cared a lot.... I glanced at my wrist watch. It made the soldier clock twenty minutes fast....

I looked at the kids, and felt them. They were sleeping the sleep of exhaustion. They were pretty hot, but I thought it best to leave them alone.

The noise went on. I felt like a fool, but I just kept standing in the center of the kids' room and looking at the door. As if I were expecting something....

Maybe I was. Anyway, it came. About ten minutes, though it seemed so much longer.... A knock came at the door.

I took a deep breath and went over to slip the bolt. I opened it a crack, and my mouth went dry.

The corridor was lighted brightly.

Outside the door stood a tall, heavy-set man in evening clothes. His hair was full of gray and his face was like yellow chalk. He was swaying, his head held forward like he would buck the wall.... His eyes were bleared as he looked up under heavy eyebrows at me.... No question but he was tanked beyond capacity....

"What do you want?" I demanded.

"You the nurse? Well, wish you'd give me a hand here. Better come." He jerked his head down the corridor and staggered back a step to balance himself.

"What's the matter with you? Speak softly. Don't wake the children."

"Shhhh!" he warned me in return, putting his finger to his nose instead of his lips. He continued in a hoarse, loud whisper. "She's filthy drunk. Dead to the world... I canned even lift her..."

"Who?" I snapped, irritably.

"Mish... Mishush.... Their mother... I canned even lift her up.... Dead to the world...."

His gesture of trying to lift Mrs. Richey up sent him careening against the wall. He seemed glad to rest there, his palms flat against the wall for support....

I glanced toward the bed. The kids were sleeping soundly. I opened the door wider and stepped out into the hall, facing the souse in evening clothes.

"Who are you?" I asked curtly.

He waved a wide gesture of dismissal to such a question.

"Never you mind, lil girl. Friend of a family, I am. Boy-friend, I am, lil girl. Aren't I nice boy-friend?"

"Where is Mrs. Richey?" I asked coldly.

"I got her's far's room," he nodded grandly, and with his hands walking along the wall, he began to lead the way.

My heart was beating like thunder as I tagged after him. ...I felt queer about the whole thing.... It frightened me to feel there was nobody else in the house.... It seemed so peculiar.

The drunk in evening clothes lurched upright and walked without the aid of his hands on the wall. He stopped with a jerk in front of a heavy-carved door formed into an arch at the top.... I heard moans behind that door; and words, unintelligible, that tried to come

through them.... I sniffed. I knew alcoholics, and didn't fancy them. They were difficult to manage.... Almost impossible to manage....

The drunk reached for the knob before I could make it. He turned toward me, his eyebrows raised in aggrievance.

"Sh'nody here;" he lowered his head again. "Nobody here at all, to help. Goddam nuisance. Her maid's not here. Devil of an idea, her maid's not here. I godda knock every door all over, and only found you.... You good lil nurse...."

"Look out!" I commanded, and shoved him aside. I opened the door and went into a dimly lighted boudoir. ... One of the grandest boudoirs I've ever been in.... The moans were racking.... They came from a form on the floor, face down, with an ermine wrap only half thrown off the figure....

I went over to the kids' mother.

# *Chapter Two*

I BENT over Mrs. Richey and picked up the ermine cape gingerly. It was soiled. I threw it over on a chair, as I stood frowning down on the slight, beautifully formed woman at my feet. An exquisite creature, despite the loathsome markings of her present debauch. The body might have belonged to a girl of eighteen, and many's the ingenue would envy that cap of sleek yellow hair, cut in heavy bangs to cover the forehead....

"Help me lift her up," I said impulsively....Then I glanced at the man in evening clothes....The friend of the family was sprawled in a rose-colored arm chair near by, as if exhausted by his heroic effort in finding help. He grinned at me....I sniffed. I knew his ilk. I didn't have a penny's use for them....

I flipped back the heavy rose-colored spread on the three-quarter bed beside me. Then, I bent down and gathered the woman up in both my arms. She was very slight. I swung her over to the bed. She began to jabber again, wildly....

I took off her silver slippers, and dropped them to the floor.... Mrs. Richey tried to sit up, protesting... half recognizing that I was the nurse, and ordering me to leave.... I expected as much.... Alcoholics are suspicious devils.... Never like you to know they're drunk.... Apt to be violent....

The man in the chair began to laugh. A laugh of high enjoyment at the show....

"You get out!" I turned to him. "I'm going to undress her now.... Get out of here."

"Shhhh!" He warned me with elaborate earnestness. "Didn't wake anybody.... I'll closh my eyes, and you go right head.... Right head.... Don't mind me...."

"Where's the housekeeper?" I demanded. "Mrs. Maxwell?"

He grinned slyly.

"How 'sh I know?"

"Why don't you go home now? Do you live here?"

"Only shertain nightzzz," he winked, and his tongue edged waggishly through his tightened lips. He waved an irritable hand suddenly. "Go'an. Ficsh her up, before she messes everythin'..."

I was distracted. Mrs. Richey's condition gave me no opportunity to argue further with the drunk, but I was fit to be tied. Boy, but I'd make things hot for him in the morning! In the meantime, I shrugged, and decided to dismiss him. Let him stay. He'd probably fall into a sodden sleep.... Anyway, I couldn't face forcing him out right then.

I saw the bathroom door open and darted in, running the hot water, grabbing towels and wash-cloths; soap, glasses, and a huge marble powder-bowl from which I dumped all the powder. It was the nearest thing I could find to a basin. I didn't feel I had time to dash to the kids' kitchen for things. I might wake them up, and besides, it wasn't so good to leave Mrs. Richey with her boy-friend right then.

I worked fast. Evidently, the drunk had some sensitivities. He sauntered unsteadily through a doorway into a connecting room. I was relieved that he had gone. Occasionally, he would come as far as the threshold, leaning heavily on the door jamb and watching me....I had a certain sense that he was watching *me* — not Mrs. Richey. But I never glanced at him, and I really didn't mind his being there, as long as he didn't interfere....I cleaned Mrs. Richey up as quick as I could, stripped off the stinking cloth-of-silver evening gown, and tore the sheets off the bed and the cases off the pillows. I found a bunch of her underthings in a big dresser near by, and grabbed a thick silk nightgown. All-over lace. I got the woman undressed. Bathed her from head to foot, and put on the nightgown. It was sweet with sachet.

I was fully conscious of the figure in evening clothes, fumbling unsuccessfully many times over with a lighter for the cigarette that dangled between his heavy lips. He tore his eyes from me long enough to find a match. Then he lit his cigarette triumphantly....With careful steadiness, he reëntered the bedroom, and sprawled himself comfortably

in the rose-colored arm-chair. His eyes smoldering under lowered lids. I didn't exactly relish him.

I rested Mrs. Richey, pale and weak, back on the bare mattress, her smooth yellow hair on the bare ticking of the pillows.

I turned to the boy-friend. His eyes were fixed on me.

"You wouldn't know where they keep the sheets, would you?" I inquired.

He shook his head, pursed his lips musingly and didn't answer.

I went through the rest of the drawers that weren't locked, snapped on the big lights, and went through the closets. Not a thing. I sighed, and crossed over to leave the room.

The boy-friend put his patent-leather foot out and tripped me. He roared with laughter.

"Good lil nurse," he wagged his finger at me.

"You swine!" I exploded, as I got to my feet.

"Where you goin'?"

I didn't answer him, but as I swung open the bedroom door, I realized he had pulled himself to his feet. I went out quickly and shut the door smart behind me. I was so mad I could have played he-loves-me — he-loves-me-not with the hairs of that man's head. I went down the corridor opening doors. I wasn't scared of the fool. I could take care of myself. I wished like anything I had a hypo needle with me.... I had given a hypo to the last alcoholic who tried to get funny with me. I jabbed him a hypo that took all the friskiness out of him....

I found a closet. It had sheets. Pink ones. Blue ones. What will you have? White satin ones, so help me God, and heavy silk ones.... The kids in this house might suffer from malnutrition, but the beds were decked up choice....

I grabbed a couple, and felt around for pillow cases.... How did it feel to sleep on satin?

As I closed the door of the closet, leaving things all in a heap for Mrs. Maxwell to cuss about when she got back, I caught sight of His Nibs standing in the hallway of Mrs. Richey's door.... He had got that far ... to watch me....

I started forward, deciding to work it so I'd get into the bedroom, and he wouldn't.

He must have guessed my idea. As I approached, he dove back into the room and plunked himself down on the arm of the rose-colored chair. I didn't look at him. I went directly to Mrs. Richey's bed and made it up. She whined. She said a few things no boy-friend ought to hear. It was none of my business.... I fixed her up as best I could.... She almost passed completely out ... mumbling weakly....

Still the man in evening clothes slouched on the arm of the rose-colored chair, his heels dug into the rug which made a caterpillar hump from the pressure. He was watching me constantly. Never took his eyes off me. I realized that, though I didn't look at him.

I went over to the phone on the bed-table and picked it up. I was sorry it wasn't a dial phone. I wished Mrs. Richey would quit her faint blabbering — it was weird.... I wanted to get this thing over with and go back to the kids.... They might wake up.

"Give me Lancaster 1800," I said, when the operator made up her mind to answer. It was Dr. Ranger's home I was calling.

I felt the evening clothes come over to me. I moved farther away, without glancing up.

Dr. Ranger's number started to buzz. Over and over and over....

"Nice lil nurse," said the man in evening clothes, and reached out to touch my arm.

I jerked my arm upward. Then I did look at him. With a look that might have told him something.

"None of your tricks!" I snapped, furious. "Or you'll get something that's coming to you! You hear?"

He laughed.

I heard Dr. Ranger's number buzz again. Over and over in my ear. Evidently, no answer. I decided to get Dr. Beaston. I clicked the phone. It took ages to get the operator.

"Give me Standish 9700," I said. "And for heaven's sake hurry. I'm calling a doctor."

I hardly know what happened next. It came too quick. With one sweep the man had picked me up off my feet in both arms....

I screamed. Naturally. He started to walk off with me into a room adjoining the bedroom....I pulled his hair. I got twisted around, so that my mouth was against his stiff hard shirt-front, but I went on screaming right into it. I was really terrified. The man was drunk, but I hadn't realized how strong he was....He carried me into the

next room, and sat down with me in a chair....I felt his huge hand inside my dress....His elbow pushed against my knees, pinning them down against the arm of the chair....His whisky breath on my face and the scratch of his cheeks on my neck....

I decided not to scream....I relaxed utterly. For almost half a minute I was relaxed, and it had its effect....The pressure of his elbow lessened, and with one swift movement, I freed myself. I fell to the floor, half pulling him with me. But I was up before he was....You don't get to be a nurse for nothing....I had pulled a certain trick before, and now I let him have it with my foot right where it would do the most good....He let out a howl of pain, and I turned and made a bee-line....

Right at the threshold, I ran into a human figure. It scared me so I shrieked. I stopped short, stepping back to face a huge hulk of a man—so tall and mighty he seemed—in blue silk pajamas and a brown brocaded dressing robe....He reached over and took hold of my arms just under the shoulder....His grasp was like a plaster cast....

"What's goin' on here?" he demanded.

His stern and insolent face, bushed with a thick black mustache, frowned down on me. I began to sob.

"He been trying to attack you? That it?" he urged, half shaking me gently.

I nodded, trying to swallow my sobs.

"The louse!"

I felt myself suddenly released, and staggered back against the door.

The man in the dressing gown stalked over to the groaning form on the floor.

"Got what you deserved!" he chuckled, as he probed with his brown leather bed-slipper the back of the figure that was almost doubled in two.

He laughed and threw me a glance of calculating appreciation. Then swiftly he stooped down and picked up the groaning drunk, carrying him as if he weighed no more than Mrs. Richey, over to a chaise longue in the corner of the room.

"Mr. Hunter," he said solemnly as he put his burden down, "you may never be the same no more!"

He chuckled again, his hands on his hips, looking down on the prostrate Mr. Hunter. Then he turned to me. I had quit crying by then. I had myself under control.

"What's the matter here?" he demanded peremptorily. "Mrs. Richey drunk?"

I nodded.

"Who are you?" I asked quickly.

"Go in and fix her, please, nurse," he came toward me with a lazy stride that belied the vitality of that huge body. "Guess she's needing you."

Mrs. Richey's cries had become more insistent. I turned without another word and went back to her. I felt terribly shaken. But it calmed me to have something pressing to do, and to feel that the master of the house was about.... Mrs. Richey was highly excited — raving — gibberish —

almost feverish....I tried not to listen to her, as I attempted to fix her up....She struggled against me. But she hadn't much strength. I fixed her back on the pillows again. And went to the phone.

I hooked my feet around a chair and dragged it over. I sat down to wait for the operator to answer.

"Hello. Give me Lancaster 1800," I said steadily as I could. Again I heard Dr. Ranger's number buzz....

Presently a hand reached in front of me and took the phone out of my grasp. I sat back and stared up at the man in the high-collared blue silk pajamas.

"What you doin'?" he demanded gruffly.

Mrs. Richey, behind him, struggled upright, her weight on one slim white arm, her other hand tugging at the brown brocade robe of the man between us.

"Come here," she pleaded thickly. "Don't be mad at me, big feller....Don't be mad at Tishy...."

Like a flash, the man turned on her.

"You shut your mouth!" he bellowed down on her.

I frowned. I couldn't grasp it. He must be Uncle Phil returned unexpectedly. He certainly was angry with her and his anger wasn't any joke....

Mrs. Richey began to whimper, and the huge man, with flashing brown eyes, straightened up and put his hands on his hips. The phone was still in his hand. I glanced around. The door to the next room was closed. Probably Mr. Hunter was still in there....

The masterpiece in the blue silk pajamas turned back to me slowly.

"Who was you calling?" he asked again quietly.

"Dr. Ranger," I told him.

He just studied me.

"I tried to get him before," I explained. "His number didn't answer. I was just trying to get Dr. Beaston when—" I jerked my head over to the closed door to indicate Mr. Hunter.

"Huh!" he said. "Well, she don't need any doctor."

"I'm the best judge of that," I snapped and got to my feet.

Mrs. Richey pulled herself up to her elbow again. She pointed at the man and began to laugh....

"I know what it is," she gurgled thickly. "You're jealous. That's what it is. You're jealous, because I came home with..."

Swiftly the man put down the phone and turned on her.

"Keep quiet, you!" he bawled angrily. "You're drunk!"

I gasped, and my throat went dry. He leaned over her, and I saw something that snapped me into action again.... A cry came from the bed, and I saw a huge hairy hand spread over Mrs. Richey's face, pushing her back vigorously on the pillow....I didn't bother to listen to what he was saying. I turned and reached for the phone. If I had that lazy operator's neck in my hands I could have cheerfully wrung it....

"Standish 9700," I said as low as I could. It seemed an eternity....If only I could get Dr. Beaston....Mrs. Richey was crying out—calling the man names, while he laughed down at her....I saw her white arms go up and take hold

of his head, trying to pull it close... tweaking his big black mustache.... I closed my eyes.... I heard Dr. Beaston's number buzz....

The next second the man had turned and seized the phone. I tried to hang on to it. He twisted it around, and with a gasp of sharp pain, I let go.

"We don't need no doctor!" he repeated loud and firm.

"You don't know how dangerous this may be," I insisted, holding on to my temper.

"Oh, it ain't dangerous," he said softly. "She's been like that before. Don't you know how to wash out her stomach?"

"Yes, but I can't do that. I haven't the authority. I have to get a doctor."

"I'll give you the authority." He smiled.

"Who are you?" I demanded for the second time.

He slouched his weight over to one foot.

"Well," he raised one eyebrow wryly. "Maybe I ain't much to give authority. But I'm the only one around to give authority. But I know what I'm doing. I'm only the chauffeur here. My name is Nick."

He might as well have hit me with a wet towel. I felt my eyes stiffen wide, and my face grow paralyzed as I stared at him. "Only the chauffeur here... Nick...."

And the kids had said that Nick, the chauffeur...!

# *Chapter Three*

I saw all the softness vanish from his face, and his humble smile close up tight, at the sight of my expression. I caught myself immediately. I wanted to hold on. I wanted terribly to hold on to myself.

"What's the matter?" One of his eyelids lowered suspiciously.

"Nothing's the matter," I snapped. "Except that your authority doesn't mean a thing."

"Yeh? Who said it don't?"

Mrs. Richey leaned halfway out of bed.... The lace on the top of her pink nightgown was tearing into shreds....

"Don't talk to her," she whimpered bitterly. "Come to me, big feller... I'll tell you about going out with Benny Hunter...."

He turned swiftly with upraised hand, and she cowered back against the satin sheets.

"You shut your mouth!" He fairly ground out the words.

I caught my breath. How could a mere chauffeur talk to

his mistress like that... and was it possible she was in love with him? The way she talked! Pleading for him to pay attention — as she would plead with a lover!... I stared at her frightened face, white against the satin pillow case. ... How completely had this pretty childish woman degenerated? The drunken condition... Uncle Phil... Benny Hunter and the black-mustached chauffeur, Nick....

Assured of the effect of his words and his gesture, the chauffeur turned back to me again.

"Who says I ain't authority? Just who says that? Huh?" he repeated with an insolent lift of his head. "What I say goes. You may as well get that. We're not telephoning no doctor to-night."

"I can't do anything for Mrs. Richey without doctor's orders," I explained grimly. "Anything might be the matter with her. I can't tell. Neither can you. I have no right to go ahead and administer treatment. This may be a matter of life and death. Now if you don't let me call the doctor, you'll be sorry."

He threw back his head and began to laugh.

"I'll be sorry!" he told himself so that he could laugh some more.

I reached for the phone.

Up he straightened, a sudden, savage anger in his eyes, and with one swift crack, he landed his fist on my jaw. I went down like a sand-bag, and for a moment I was stunned. I heard Mrs. Richey's scream. Then I felt myself being picked up. Held against his hip, one arm around me.... He stalked out of the bedroom, and down the cor-

ridor with me. I tried to scream, but he held me so tight I couldn't breathe.... I felt a hot, numbed stinging in my chin.

He opened a door. And set me on my feet... I staggered, and caught hold of a dresser to steady myself. I was gasping. I don't know what I was saying. But he paid no attention; he merely slammed the door on me — and almost at the same moment instinctively I slipped the bolt.

I was back in the children's room.... I turned and looked at the tiny beds. The kids were still asleep. I tried to choke back my sobs. I was dreadfully shaken and could hardly control myself. So furious I couldn't breathe straight. I found myself sitting on a chair, crying and trembling all over.... I kept telling myself not to wake the kids, as I bungled my way into their sitting room.... I went around bolting every door that I thought might be an entrance into that suite... the kitchen, and the sitting room, and the bathroom....

In the bathroom I ran cold water over my wrists, and bathed my head and neck.... The bruise on my jaw wasn't serious. But it hurt. I bathed it, putting peroxide on it, and some diluted iodine.... Some cotton and a strip of adhesive. ...I looked like the devil.... Two buttons had ripped off my uniform. I pinned it together. It was the best I could do. I'd have given the world if there was a telephone in the kids' room.... What I wouldn't have said to Dr. Ranger or Dr. Beaston right about then!... Ethics be damned. ...I jumped every time I heard a noise, and listened continually at the doors.... I was cold with fear and anger....

I didn't hear a sound ... and I began to feel quieter. I wondered what he was doing, and how he intended to boss the incapacitated Mrs. Richey.... The fool! Such a beautiful woman, too, with everything in the world.... Some people just asked for punishment.... That's all right, if you don't force the punishment on others.... Where the hell did that chauffeur get his bossy ideas? ... The way she made love to him — enough to make you sick to your stomach.... And that other pig — Mr. Hunter.... The dirty drunk.... I hoped I had crippled him for life.... What a household! And buried pitifully in their midst, poor little Nanny and Desney....

The kids woke up around six. One woke the other. I carried them each into the bathroom, and they each wanted a drink of water. They were sleepy, and I was grateful for that. I sat beside their bed, and they fell off again very shortly. I sat there very still for almost a half hour. I could hardly move in my skin....

By the time Maloney came I was already dressed for the street. I still was shaky.

"Hello, what's the uproar in the house?" she asked first off. "Dr. Ranger is here."

"If he is, I want to talk to him," I said grimly.

"What's eating *you?*"

I shrugged.

"The mother came home drunk. Her boy-friend tried to get fresh. I gave him what for. The chauffeur hit me — wouldn't let me call the doctor. That's all."

"That's enough," said Maloney, wide-eyed.

"Did you ever see that chauffeur?"

She shook her head.

"Well, if you're fool enough to stay here, keep your doors locked, and watch out for a big black mustache."

"He's never around in the day time. Are you quitting?"

"Quitting? I can't get out fast enough! I just want to see what the street looks like."

"You're upset," Maloney decided.

"You said it."

I went right out. I didn't trust myself to speak any further, and Maloney knew me too well to ask more questions.

"I'll call you up," she chirped as I made for the door.

I went through the kids' room.... The poor little devils were still asleep....

"I'll come over to-night, if you're going to be in!" Maloney added. I nodded, and left.

Down the corridor I went, my brief case in my hand, and at Mrs. Richey's door, I hesitated. Almost instantly, the door opened, and a maid came out. An elderly woman, in gray silk uniform and stiff white apron.

"Are you the nurse?" she asked the moment she saw me.

"I'm the night nurse. Why?"

"Dr. Ranger wants the nurse to help him. He's going to give a stomach wash."

"I'm just leaving," I said quietly. "Miss Maloney, the day nurse, has just come. I guess she'll help."

"Oh. Thanks."

"Are you Mrs. Maxwell?"

"No. Mrs. Maxwell won't be back until late this afternoon. I wish she was here."

We both looked at each other, but I decided not to say anything. I went on, down the corridor, and out of the apartment. If Dr. Ranger was about to give a stomach wash, it was no time to try to talk to him.

I went directly to the St. George Hospital, and saw Miss Dillon, the superintendent. I told her straight out. I wanted that chauffeur arrested.

"Don't be a fool, Hart," Miss Dillon pursed her lips. "You're all excited."

"Maybe you wouldn't be."

"Do as you please, but you'll probably make a big mistake."

"Why? I'll appear against him. I swear to God I'll put that man behind bars before I'm through! ..."

"Nobody will believe you. You haven't got a witness. Mrs. Richey wouldn't be any witness, even if she wanted to be. She was drunk. Who's going to believe you, if the chauffeur denies it?"

"But the kids! — Surely, Miss Dillon, something ought to be done for those kids. If that chauffeur...."

"The kids won't tell. They almost never do. They wouldn't dare open their mouths. They told you only because they liked you a lot — and knew you. Ten to one they wouldn't be believed, either. The mother wouldn't let it get that far. Dr. Ranger wouldn't want such a smell, either. Use your head."

I stared at her desk.

"You can't go off half-cocked like that. It isn't like you, anyway, Hart. I don't blame you for being excited."

"I'm going to tell Ranger."

"Of course. Explain, at least, why you're leaving the case, so he won't hold it against you. See what he says, anyway. It was a pretty close call, Hart, and I'm sorry. I'm glad you told me. I certainly won't send any more of my girls there. If they want another night nurse, thev'll have to call an agency. I won't supply them."

"Why did the last night nurse leave the Richey's?" I demanded, wondering why I hadn't asked that before.

"The children didn't like her. They have their very violent likes and dislikes."

I stared at her desk some more.

"I have a private pregnancy, in Brooklyn," said Miss Dillon, leaning forward over her cards. "Friends of Dr. Beaston's. Would you like to take it?"

"No. I'd like to rest a few days."

"Well, give me a ring, or drop in whenever you're ready." She leaned back in her chair and edged her glasses tighter on her nose. "I'll keep something good for you. I'm sorry you've been so upset. Think it over, Hart. I wouldn't try to make a fuss. It won't get you anywhere."

"All right. If you need me, call me. I'll be okey in a day or so. I just want to rest. Good-by."

"Bye."

I went back to my own flat, on Seventy-sixth Street. I roomed with a day nurse named Bertha Finch. We had

trained together. At first we hadn't seen so much of each other, but for the last seven years we had an apartment together. Finch was a real person, all around, but bright as a new dollar. She worked in the daytime, and I worked at night. It gave us both a feeling of privacy in the apartment. A nice combination.

Finch was out. I fixed myself some toast and tea and an egg. Then I took a bath. Then I phoned Dr. Ranger. He wasn't in.

I went to bed and fell asleep. I didn't wake up until around four in the afternoon. The phone was ringing. A call for Finch. Her Mrs. Paxton wanted a high colonic that evening. Finch was always getting extra jobs like that. A high colonic here, two or three times a week, at five dollars a throw. A bladder irrigation one place, and a bunch of hypos at various other places. Finch picked up a good twenty-five to forty dollars a week extra that way. Sometimes she would leave a patient a half hour during the day "to go to the drug store," and dash over to another woman and give her an insulin-hypo. Three dollars for that — and then back to her regular patient! Smart, Finch was. I wasn't that smart. I got $56 a week, and that was enough to live on. Sometimes I did an extra job here and there, but not so often. I liked my free time.

I took the message for Finch. Then I called Dr. Ranger. He asked me to come down. Cut me right off short. Afraid to let me talk over the phone evidently. I got dressed and took the subway down to his office. Inside, I told him the whole story.

A grayed, tired, seedy little man he was, in spite of all his rich patients. Nervous and shifty and fidgety. None of the girls liked him. He had his own crowd though — about four old ones that worked steady for him.

"I'm dreadfully sorry you had such a miserable experience, Miss Hart," he said slowly when I was finished, and sat back with my eyes blazing. "But after all, it is none of your affair. None of my affair, either. It is a peculiar family. Most peculiar. But, it is none of our affair. If the brother-in-law, Mr. Phillip Richey, were home, nothing like that would ever happen, I assure you. He manages them with a firm hand. The family would go to pieces without him. I'm sure as soon as he returns, the chauffeur will be fired."

I looked up at him without batting an eye. He was hedging. He knew damn well that chauffeur wouldn't be fired.

He stirred uneasily.

"Of course, I can't believe what the children told you is true. Those children are given to nightmares — distorted ideas — They tell many funny stories. Lots of children are like that. Their imagination runs away with them."

I didn't say a word.

I was beginning to get Dr. Ranger's number.

His phone buzzed, and he answered it.

Then he lit a cigarette, and turned back to me.

"Miss Dillon was quite right in her advice. You would really get nowhere by trying to sue. Or trying to arrest that chauffeur. Only a lot of most unpleasant publicity — with an exceedingly wealthy family against you who would be justifiably indignant. You understand? Mr.

Phillip Richey, I'm sure, would be most indignant. You see what I mean?"

I looked right at him. I wasn't afraid of Dr. Ranger. I didn't say a word.

He doused the cigarette.

"If you go back there to-night, I'm sure, you'll have no—"

"I wouldn't go back. To-night or any night."

"I can see how you feel. I'm glad you told me. And I'm sorry you had such an unpleasant experience. By the way, Miss Hart, do you ever touch liquor yourself?"

I turned to him, my eyes narrowed.

"I asked Miss Dillon." He tapped his ten outspread finger tips together. "She said she had known you upon occasion to take a drink. Only upon occasion."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean—if they brought that out, of course, they could blame you for the whole thing. They might say you were drunk too. See what I mean? Human nature is very peculiar, Miss Hart."

"I'll say it is," I said meaningfully. "But those kids—"

"The Richey children are under the best of care," Dr. Ranger cleared his throat. "I'm watching after them constantly. Good day, Miss Hart."

"Good-bye, Dr."

"I'd forget the whole episode if I were you."

I nodded. I had a hot come-back but I didn't dare say it.

When I left I called up Lester, my boy-friend. I had a date to meet him at five-thirty when he left his office. He

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worked with a huge and important wholesale drug and chemical firm downtown. But I didn't feel up to seeing him. I knew if I met him I'd blab everything. Later, when I cooled off, I'd only tell him what would be good for him to know. So I called him up, and he was sore. I was glad he was sore, and made a date for the next night at five-thirty. It made me feel better that he was sore. Lately he hadn't been so sore when I broke dates.

I meant to go home then. I had no intention of going to see Dr. Beaston. But I found myself right at the door of his big building, and then right in front of his office-door, ringing his bell.

His Miss Mills, a nice old Biddy who hadn't been compromised the last fifty years come next Sunday, told me I'd have to wait a while. She was very polite; she knew Beaston thought highly of me.

I sat down to wait. I found I was sitting plunk in front of a mirror. I didn't like the looks of myself. I'm not bow-legged, nor cross-eyed nor have I any visible warts. But I'm the kind that has to keep very trig and spanking fresh or else I look like ten cents' worth of sweepings. I looked like ten cents' worth of sweepings right then. I crossed the room and took another seat. There was a bunch of magazines on the table beside me, and I looked at their titles. I don't like magazines. The advertisements drive me crazy. So many things I'd give my front tooth for and can't afford....

Beaston sent for me in about twenty minutes. So I went

in. He was drying his arms and hands when I entered, his shirt sleeves rolled up.

His wife certainly kept him dressed well. Boy, he was a dresser! One of the handsomest doctors in New York City. Not very tall, certainly not very stout, quite dark hair and eyes, but boy, he was handsome. About forty-eight, I should say. Not the one for nonsense, though he had a quick word for every one and a fine sense of humor. As swell a surgeon as I had ever met, and I've had my share of surgeons, day and night. Lots of big men in town had Beaston as their doctor all year round. Would rather have gone without their life insurance than their Beaston.

"Well, Lora, how's things?" Dr. Beaston had known me since my Prob days, and whenever he wanted to be particularly pleasant he called me Lora.

"I'm awfully upset, Dr. Beaston," I said, coming right to the point, which was what he always liked best. "And I'm coming to tell you about it because I wish you'd do something. You're one man who could help."

He raised one eyebrow, tossed aside his towel, and began rolling down his sleeves.

"You didn't get yourself into trouble, I hope?"

So I explained. I told him everything. I didn't care whether it was none of my business or not. I knew Dr. Beaston would understand, and not criticize me for stepping out of my place.

He sat at his desk, before me, and listened intently, clicking together his cuff-buttons thoughtfully, and interposing an occasional epitaph about the chauffeur.

"Listen, I don't care a snap," I said, when I was through with the story. "It's all over as far as I'm concerned. But I do think there's something peculiar about the whole case. And I wish you'd do something for those kids, Dr. Beaston. It's rotten mean that nobody seems to care about them."

Dr. Beaston thrust out his hands with a sudden appealing gesture, and let them drop to his knees with a slap.

"What can I do?" he demanded. "It's not my case. I can't interfere with Dr. Ranger. I can't do a thing. I'm out of it entirely."

I watched him get up impetuously and put on his vest, which he buttoned with absent-minded fingers.

"Of course. I should have known," I sighed. "I'm glad I told you, though."

"Well, I'm not!" he said grimly. "I'm not at all. I'd prefer not to know....I was a particular friend of the father. As fine a man as ever lived. He died about a year ago. He knew he was going, too. Lived for four years on one kidney. They all knew he was going. I did my utmost to save him. He flew all the way from the coast to me for the final hope. It's beastly to see his family going to the dogs like that, but..."

"Going to the dogs!" I repeated as he hesitated with a sigh. "They're going to their graves! Those kids won't last another six months and you know it, unless something is done for them. And they're making an alcoholic of the mother....It's the uncle's doing. I'm sure it is!"

I stopped suddenly, red as a beet. I had really gone a few

words too far. Beaston had every right to throw me the look he did and stiffen.

"I'm sorry," I said dully. "It's none of my business. I just felt sorry for the kids."

"So do I," he added kindly. "I feel *damn* sorry for them. But what do you expect me to do, Lora? Walk in and take charge of the family and boss them around?"

I smiled.

He pulled up the knees of his trousers as he sat down.

"Every so often, Hart," he said slowly, "we come across a case that gets us. Generally, it's fatal. Only trouble for your thanks. A barrel of trouble. We, unfortunately, are in a business where human emotions become entangled in our work. We must remember to keep ourselves separate from our jobs. A case is a case. A lawyer can't lance a boil for his client, and a doctor can't break a contract for his patient. You can't mother the world. You must remember that you are hired to do certain things. You're not hired to solve life's problems for any of your patients. The world doesn't want to be mothered."

I smiled again. Dr. Beaston always made me feel sane.

He played with a tweezer on his desk a moment, and the lamp beside him cast a high-light from the tweezer onto the wall. It was a beautiful lamp—a white marble nude lady that had a light glowing inside of her.... Probably a gift from some patient grateful to be alive.... Beaston was always loaded with such gifts from patients....

"I think you might go and take a long walk on the

Drive. Or go out and visit some friend in the country over the week-end. Put the Richeys out of your mind. They are no worse than hundreds you've seen."

He smiled at me then. His quick flash of a smile that made his strong face look so impish and boyish....

"Thanks," I said. "I feel like a fool for coming.... You're right. You're always right. I won't take up any more of your time."

"You're a good girl, Lora. Don't let it get you."

Miss Mills came in at that moment, and with another smile at Beaston, I left.

I did feel a lot better for the talk with him. And I was kinda glad, at that, that he knew about the Richeys. It made me feel safer to know he knew about them.

I walked home, slowly, looking in the shop windows without much interest. I always look in shop windows out of the corner of my eyes as I walk. I stopped and had a bite to eat in Child's. It was easier than messing around at home, trying to rustle up a meal. I hate cooking, and I'm supposed to do it for the two of us because Finch gets home so tired from her day's work. I pay fifteen dollars a month less than my share of the rent for doing it. There wasn't so much to do, as both Finch and I got three meals out on jobs. Of course when I was held up, or didn't get home, I couldn't do it, and no harm meant. To-night, I had no intention of doing it.

After Child's, I went to see a movie; following Beaston's advice, to forget all about it. It took me some time to find a picture that wasn't a talkie. I can't stand them, because

I get so fed up with talk anyway. Most patients talk you weak, and the main joy pictures has for me is to see people that don't utter a word....

I only stayed a couple of hours. I was too restless to enjoy anything. Besides, they never got to the picture. They had music, and vaudeville acts, and a comedy feature, and news reels and a travelogue, and by that time they could keep my fifty cents. I didn't want their old picture.

So I went home. And there was Maloney and she had evidently told a mouthful to Finch already. They were both sitting at the table just outside the kitchenette, eating cheese and tomato sandwiches and tea. Finch loves tea. Expensive tea.

"Well, it's about time you showed up," Finch turned and grinned at me. "What's the idea of the target on your chin? I thought you had been a nurse long enough to know better."

"You take the words out of my mouth," I said, as I pulled off my hat. "I've been a nurse long enough. Plenty. I'm through."

"What do you mean through?" Maloney snapped.

"I mean I'm all washed up. I'm fed up. I'm never going to be a nurse again."

# *Chapter Four*

NOTHING they'd say made any impression on me. I got out of my clothes, and into my nightgown and kimono, and slippers, and sat there, just relaxing. Finally, they decided to humor me. I wasn't going to be a nurse any more? Too bad. A great loss to the profession.... But I had a nice rep behind me. I had done very well. What did I think I'd do next to pass my life away? Get married? I said, perhaps; it wasn't a bad idea. And they said, Lester? And I said, oh, Lester isn't ready to marry yet. And they said, no man is ready to marry yet. And they laughed and repeated that over and over because it was so smart.

Maloney insisted upon telling me about the Richeys, and I said I didn't want to hear about them. She could stay on the job if she wanted to. But if she went on talking about them, I'd go to bed and close my door. But Finch asked a lot of questions and Maloney answered them all wrong, so I had to tell the story of the night before.

"Gosh, some experience!" said Finch.

"I hope to tell you," I nodded. "It just topped everything off. I've had a thousand and one nights all right, but that took the cake."

"I think Miss Dillon was rotten mean to say you ever took a drink," muttered Finch, good and mad for me.

"Oh, the old mug," I grunted. "She'd play with Dr. Ranger. And Ranger is playing with Uncle Phil...."

"And if you had any sense," flared Maloney, "you'd play with the children."

"Yeh, and where would it get me?" I yawned. "By the way, have you got a little drink handy, Finch?"

"Sure," grinned Finch. "The last bottle your Great Admirer left here."

(My Great Admirer was a man named Mortimer Finley, who had twice been a patient of mine, at the St. George. He was a scream. A bootlegger. Nice chap with freckles. Took me out driving every so often in his Chrysler. Nothing really between us—he just admired me. That was all right by me. I liked the rides, and I wouldn't have liked him to become mushy, because Lester was my boy. Besides how could I ever become unsteady over Mortimer, when I had tended him like only a mother should...once when he had shot in his left thigh, and once when he had appendicitis. But he was the only man I knew who had a car; and his bootlegging was none of my business, was it?)

Finch fixed me up a little snifter. I seldom drank, but I just felt a bit wrecked. We celebrated the fact I wasn't going to be a nurse any more. Then we discussed that.

How long I was going to undo being a nurse? Should I go into training to forget everything I knew? Who would supervise me, and when would I *un*graduate? People in the theater said the "smell of the greasepaint" gets into your blood. Well, how could I get rid of the smell of ether and the excitement of being on the go all the time?

Maloney weakened and had a drink too. She slapped herself out full length on the couch that lied about being a bed, and lit herself a cigarette. Nurses aren't much at smoking really. Smoking is a habit, and nurses seldom have time to acquire the habit. Maloney had got the habit from her oculist chap.

"Mrs. Richey called me in late this afternoon," Maloney said, watching the clouds of smoke like it was an achievement.

"Aw, shut up about the Richeys," I protested. "Life holds something besides Richeys."

"And she asked me all about you," Maloney continued calmly. "Where you lived and what all. She was quite weepy and she said she had a feeling you saved her life."

"That makes fifty-six, doesn't it?" Finch put in. "Isn't that the fifty-sixth life you've saved, Hart?"

"Listen," I said, sitting upright. "I'm proud of some of those lives!"

"Don't blame you. I've saved a few myself. Now take Maloney, here. She's just saved the life of a Lyon."

That was a knock-kneed crack. Lyon was Maloney's oculist chap. Maloney had been living with him near a year, and had only quit the last month or so. Poor Maloney

had set Lyon up in business — hired him his office, and bought practically all this equipment with her savings, and lived with him to boot. And now Lyon was giving her the go-by. A pretty tough go-by.

"Don't you worry," Maloney said grimly. "I'll get that money back from him."

"From where?" taunted Finch, who thought anybody who was stupid about money was too stupid to live.

"When he starts having customers," Maloney jerked her head with an air of finality. "He won't want any scandal. So I'll get my money."

"Ah," I said, rising dramatically and putting down my empty glass. "But can you prove it, my dear child? What witness have you got if the oculist decides to deny it? And isn't it true, my dear Miss Maloney, that you take a drink yourself — upon occasion?"

"I got plenty of witnesses," grunted Maloney, only half appreciating my intimation. "Witnesses are cheap. And as for drinking. Lyon can drink me under three tables in one evening."

The phone rang and I answered it because it was at my elbow. It was Mortimer Finley, asking me if I'd like a drive in the country to-morrow. I told him I'd love to drive in the country to-morrow, and he said to be ready in my sables by eleven in the morning. I asked him how's business, and he said he hadn't any business. Then he asked me how was my business, and I said I hadn't any either.

I hung up and grinned. Both Maloney and Finch could

have repeated every word verbatim, but they were both intent upon being occupied.

"Well," said Finch, rising brusquely. "I've got to go give that high colonic. Then I'm going down to see the kid."

The kid was Finch's little sister, who was a Prob at the Westside Hospital training school.

"Thought she was coming up here," I frowned.

"No, she lost her late permission again," sighed Finch. "Poor Viv can get into more trouble. The Supt. is terribly against her."

"Vivian's too pretty," grunted Maloney. "Naturally the Superintendent would start putting her in her place from the beginning."

"There are a lot of rich girls in her class," Finch explained as she put on a fresh uniform. "Send cars to take the Supt. out driving or shopping, and give the Supt. candy and lace collars and theater tickets."

"You have enough money," Maloney turned her head lazily and looked upside down at Finch who was standing behind her. "Why don't you cough up some of it and help the kid along?"

"Why should I?" shrugged Finch. "The kid and I need the money for more important things. She can take the knocks. She might as well learn to. She has it a lot easier than I had, anyway. I didn't even have a decent trunk to take into training school. I only had a carpet bag. And besides, my Supt. was a Lesbian, and maybe that wasn't a handful to manage."

"Where was that?" Maloney wanted to know.

"Right down in Freedom Hospital," Finch said grimly. "And the same lady is the Supt. at Maxim's now. Still playing the old army game."

"Nice to know," Maloney slumped back and picked the loose tobacco out of her cigarette absent-mindedly.

"What's the use of training the kid anyway in this rummy business?" I sighed as I filled my glass up again and threw Finch's old uniform on the floor so I could sit on the chair. "I could tell her a few things. Better she should be a milliner, or a manicurist...."

"You leave her alone," Finch flared at me. "The kid will come through fine. She may get to be a Supertintendent of nurses herself some day. She swears she will."

"Oh, at that rate, go ahead," I grinned. "When she's a Superintendent, I'll go back to being a nurse again."

"I wonder how it feels like to be a Superintendent?" Maloney mused.

"Why don't you try wondering how it feels to be a woman doctor?" I suggested.

"Oh, Hart, drink up and be quiet."

"What's the matter with women doctors?" snapped Finch. "I don't expect Maloney to like anything. But you're not like that, Hart, as a rule."

"Did I say anything was the matter with them?" Maloney sat up crossly.

"I know one woman doctor who's got the men beat a thousand ways."

"That's what's the matter with her," Maloney nodded, and punched the pillows into comfort.

"I've worked with Dr. Bessie Berner, on many cases," Finch planked her hat down firmly, "and what that woman doesn't know! Believe me, there's less nonsense to her, and less conceit...."

"And less graft, I suppose?"

"Graft isn't here nor there," snapped Finch.

"It certainly isn't here," Maloney agreed blandly.

"And believe me, Dr. Berner had a tough time of it," Finch added. "She fought for her career...."

"She's still fighting," nodded Maloney. "She had a fight with me last week."

I yawned. Our doorbell rang, sharply. And I stopped yawning. Finch went over and opened the door. Her kid sister stood outside.

They fell on each other's necks. Such greetings and mewings you never heard. I sniffed. It always made me feel a bit irritable. And lonesome. I never had anybody to make a fuss over, or to think I was a model... I hadn't any folks....

The kid came in and threw off her things, and greeted Maloney and me; and made eyes at the liquor, imitating her Supt.'s shocked anger, and flopped into a chair.

"I thought you lost your late permission," Finch had her arm around the kid.

"Well, I did," Vivian nodded. "But Agnes Rogers took the blame for me. I haven't had a night off in five weeks. So she took the blame, and she's staying in, and here I am. Have you anything decent to eat? Honest, Bertha, I

haven't seen good food in so long, I'm weak. Prunes, and..."

"And bread bricks," Maloney put in.

"Yeh," the kid smiled mournfully. "I get those rolls at breakfast, and chew them all through the roll call and the hymns, and never make a dent on them."

"I can see it all now," I broke in. "Hard eggs that even a ship's mascot wouldn't eat. Tapioca pudding, and gravy that looks like spring thaw in the suburbs, and soup that..."

"Please don't talk about the soup," said the kid. "It's the only thing I can eat right now."

Finch took off her hat and coat.

"I'll fix you a swell feed," she promised. "Just a minute, and I'll phone I can't come. I was on my way to give a high colonic."

"I'll go give it," suggested Maloney. "Split the five with you."

"You've just been drinking," frowned Finch.

"Well, what's a little drink between high colonics? Okey? All right. Then I'm going home and flop into bed. I'm all used up."

"You shouldn't drink and smoke," growled Finch, while she was writing out the high colonic's address.

"Don't talk like that, Sis," the kid frowned. "It sounds just like Miss Clark."

"That your Supt.?" I asked. The kid nodded, and I watched her closely. She was awfully pretty. She really might have got into a chorus. Not a good chorus. But a

chorus. She was very very blond. And had blue eyes. That would help her a lot later on. Or it might make things difficult for her. Depending upon how smart she was. I had a feeling she wasn't very smart. She was too young, and liked good times, and she wasn't awed. She had seen so much of the game from Finch and Finch's friends.

Maloney said good-by and started off to the high colonic. I helped Finch get the feed. And she and the kid and I sat and ate and talked. We had ham and eggs, and marmalade and some rolls heated up, and apple pie and milk. The kid had brought a new dance record for our wheezy old portable victrola, and she played it over and over. It was a nice record. Some guy kept yelling for Lady Luck....

After the feed I decided to turn in and leave them together to talk. But the kid protested. She broke the news that a couple of friends were going to stop over around ten. Wouldn't Bertha please be nice to them? Oh, they were just internes, but nice boys!

Bertha laced her up and down about internes. So Vivian asked would she rather have her go around with them on the sly? There isn't any answer for that, is there? Vivian kissed Bertha, and sat in her lap and coaxed her up. Bertha gave in. She always gave in to the kid.

So we began to ready the place up. At first I said I'd just turn in. But the kid wouldn't hear of it. So I got dressed. I put on a green satin dress which Mrs. Ginsberg, one of my patients, had given me. It had just come from the cleaner. I looked nice in it. Mrs. Ginsberg had given

me a lot of stuff. Her husband was a furrier, and she was young. She never gave me a fur, but she gave me a lot of her old dresses, and a nice brooch of marcasite.

The kid went out to buy up some cakes and pastry and ginger ale and coco-cola, which she loved, and some potato salad at a delicatessen, while Bertha and I got dressed. Then we sat down and talked. Mostly about the kid, and her hospital work. I watched and wondered. I could remember my own training, with every word she spoke. She asked Bertha for some more money for books. You have to buy your books. And there are new ones all the time. They'll take it out of your check if necessary, or you can work it out later. You see, the hospital pays you while you're training. They don't pay while you're on probation, though they do give you food and board during that time. Probation takes about three or four months, depending on the hospital. Then when you've passed your Prob exams — which are written, oral *and* practical ( and oh, boy, what a rumpus ), you settle down and you get paid twenty or twenty-five a month, plus your room and board. You are in a room with one other. Agnes Rogers was the kid's roommate. A girl from Scranton, Pa. About five years older than the kid.

The kid was about to face her exams in a week. We told her all about it. You'll have to make a bed, no doubt, says we, and give morning or evening care to a patient in one of the wards. I hope he'll be young, said the kid. Who? says Finch. The patient I have to give morning or evening care to. You'll have to set up a tray, I put in,

and wash a face and comb somebody's hair. And maybe give a bath. And you'll have strings and strings of oral questions on etiquette. Oh, they kill you with hospital etiquette, the kid frowned. Gosh, I'm always wrong. My skirt is too short to-day and too long to-morrow, and every little thing I do I lose my late permission.

You see a nurse in training has one late permission a week, which means she can stay out until twelve at night. But just sneeze, and you lose your late permission. Mostly you lose it by coming in late to breakfast. A bell gets you up at 6:15. And you are supposed to be down at 6:30 to breakfast, which isn't so bad really, in the present day modern hospitals; except that the girls get *so* sick of it and it's their pet indoor sport to complain. A favorite topic of conversation — the same as in boarding schools, I suppose. Nurses fresh from a bedside are in no condition to enjoy *any* food for that matter.

Then you're on duty at 7 A.M.

If I bore you, you can skip all this. But all nurses go through it. They train them like animals. *We* had been through it. And Viv was going through it now.

One of the first things you learn is how to make a hospital bed. This may or may not be fun, depending upon the hospital. The internes are sometimes very playful. Almost everywhere they think it's fun to get the goats of the new nurses or the Probs. They tease them, and give them wrong messages, and try to make dates under their voices so's you'll meet them on the corner. You're for-

bidden to notice the internes, or any other males, except as duty routine. No smiles or jokes with the internes, says the Supt. The internes think different. They like to kid you—and how! If they get too hot, you can complain about them at the office. A lot of good it will do you. Go ahead and complain, and see what it gets you. The internes get called down, and then, oh boy, they have it in for you. Besides, the Supt. never thinks so much of you for complaining either. And so *she* has it in for you. A waspish look comes into her eyes.

God, I'll never forget my own years in the training school. I was only sixteen when I went in, but I lied about my age and said I was eighteen. I guess the dicipline was awful good for me. I needed it. I was a pretty tarty and independent kid. My own mother had been so wild, and I had learned to jaw back at her and ignore her crazy demands all my childhood. But the very fact that she was so wild was what made me want to be really good. I hated her for the kind of flighty life she led, and I knew, even at sixteen, that I wanted to be good and kind—and earn my own living so I wouldn't have to sass a man for what I needed.

It took me four trys to get into a training school in New York. I didn't have any one to really introduce me, you see. You have to have umptiumph credentials and references. The landlady in Astoria that my mother had dumped me on was only too glad to help because that got rid of me in a perfectly nice way. So she rustled up as much "influence" as she could....It's best by far if a

doctor introduces you, and if he is a doctor that is liked or is powerful, you get in on the right foot.

I tried to get into that damn hospital for weeks, and one day when I was turned away again for references, I went out into the vestibule and cried. A good juicy weep. ... The doorman wasn't there, and it was raining outside, and I felt entitled to use the vestibule as a wailing wall for a while.... And along came Dr. Beaston, and asked me what was the matter.... I knew he was a doctor connected with the hospital and got all red and embarrassed, so that I couldn't answer. And he shoved back his overcoat and dug his hand in his pocket and held out a bill.

"You can pay me back when you get to it, child," he said, and not till they close my eyes will I forget the kindness in his voice. "I've been broke myself."

Well, that snapped the tears out of my throat, and I told him I didn't need money (which was a lie), but that I couldn't get into the training school because my family didn't seem any too good. (I had been fool enough to tell everything about my mother, and how I didn't even know where she was!) So Beaston got that funny little turn to his left lip, and edged me into the small reception room, and stood there asking me questions.... I answered them all without any trimmings....

Then he brought me to the Superintendent of Nurses and told her she ought to make room for me, if she could.

"I think," says Dr. Beaston, "that this young lady is very serious, and will apply herself earnestly. I will stand back of her."

"Most certainly, Dr. Beaston," goos the superintendent with a slippery smile. "I'd be delighted to take her in. I didn't know you knew Miss Hart. There's just one thing — she tells me she has had only *one* year of high school."

"Oh," Dr. Beaston laughed as if having only one year of high school was as absurd as having only one tooth. "She must have misunderstood the application blank. She became so confused, I'm afraid."

He turned to me, wide-eyed.

"Didn't you forget to put in about the summer school you went to?" says he to me, as if reminding me of my long lost brother.

"Why, I—" I began, not being any too smart those days.

"Of course you did. Now you fill out your applications all over again. And put in about the two sessions of summer school. Then bring them to me. I'll look them over. You may come to my office at four this afternoon."

Forthwith, he smiles at me reassuringly. Then he tells the Supt. he thinks her work is going wonderfully, and never before did the hospital run quite so much like Swiss clock-work. She got coy and laughed. And he laughed. And pretty soon he went about his business without another look at me. And the Superintendent turned back to me, sweet as a banana split, and helped me make my application all over again....

No wonder I worked like a bus horse in that training school. And no wonder I adored Beaston like an idol

those first few years, until I got to know him well enough to think of him as a human being and a friend....

And no wonder I went through the rest of the routine without a thought of complaining....With only ideals and dreams of a career of "service and solace." I filled out miles of application blanks (which Beaston glanced over and signed without so much as a personal word to me, any more than if I was a lamp-post!) I knew it was a lie about the summer school, and I knew he knew. But nobody ever mentioned it. You're supposed to have a complete high school education before you can train as a nurse. But some hospitals take you on two or three years of high school....Not that most patients care, when you come right down to it. When you're changing a dressing it never occurs to them to wonder how well you spell....The Superintendent was fairly nice to me after that....I had a physical exam, which was pretty rough, and passed two doctors; and got a dental slip to show my teeth were okey....Of course if anything ails you in the hospital, later, they do fix you up. You can have corns or toothaches taken care of, and you don't have to pay.

So then you get in. And you start to equip yourself. Most of the Probs pay for their costumes, which are either handed out, or ordered for you, or you are sent to a place with a slip of paper in your hand....If you're very poor, God forbid, like I was, you may be provided with left-overs that other girls had, and you fix them up to fit.... Then you sit down and sew name tapes on everything down to the last stocking and handkerchief....

Where I was, the Probs wore pink and white check gingham; and you had to have a half dozen and were allowed two a week in the wash.... I borrowed from my landlady out in Astoria to pay for the shoes (for which I was sent to a certain place that gave us a discount and a short vamp) .... Black ties with cuban heel. Made to wear well.... Black stockings, and no silk ones for Probs, if you please.... Don't wear rings.... No jewelry, young ladies, not even a pin.... Especially pins.... A half dozen big white aprons, gathered like a lamp shade, with a big deep belt.... Nothing on your head but your hair and your worries.... Most hospitals won't permit bobbed hair either, and you must wear a hair net — and just let them see some wisps sticking out at the back of your neck! They'll think up another fancy "punishment" for you.... Not only do you lose your hours off, or your late permission, but you get trick jobs to do.... You are told to wash and powder rubber gloves during your time off; or scrub instruments, or count linen, or fix trays, or check a linen closet. Any old thing. That's one of their cute ways of passing the buck and getting their work done for them, for a change. Swell system.... Here's a bunch of new girls. Do they think it's a cinch? Huh, we'll show them. It was hard enough on us when we trained — we'll show these softies that life isn't a pipe....

Most everybody is out to get the new girls anyway.... Natural enough. A new bunch showing up in the hospital every six months or so relieves monotony.... Just let a girl try to be perfect.... If she is very neat, and always

so careful about everything, maybe the old girls, or an interne, comes and messes up her room, upsetting a chair, and pulling open a drawer or something.... And when the Supt. comes to check up, you can figure out the rest....

I'll never forget a trick that one chivalrous male pulled on me when I'd been training only a few weeks.... His name was Peter Rice. He's a doctor out in Detroit now.... He had been trying to get my blood to boil right from the start. Just a heller, who thought he was all the Marx Brothers rolled into one.... But I kept cool, and did my seething in private.... And then came a time when one of his riotous jokes snapped right back at him.... He had put the skeleton into a bed that I was supposed to turn down and get ready! God, it scared me! It was just the model skeleton used at lectures, but that didn't muffle my screams... which tickled him so that he put it in again the next day. Only he got mixed up. He put it where I *wasn't* on duty. And they brought an emergency patient in without warning because the emergency ward was stacked high. There had been a fire on the block. So they brought this poor patient in, bandaged, and told him to lie down; and he turned down the bed and saw the skeleton and fainted. Nobody would tell on Peter Rice.... Not but what he was found out and maybe he wasn't punished!... They find out everything in the hospitals; it's a great training school for detectives....

You can't have a lazy bone in your whole 206 if you want to become a nurse. They work you eight hours a day, and overtime means nothing in their lives.... You

have two hours off in the afternoon (unless you're being punished) and generally you are so tired you fall into bed... or study. You have plenty to study.... After seven at night you can go out, if you have any spunk left in you and if you know where to go. But you must be back and lights out at ten. Except the one late permission a week....

And you have one roommate (for they put two in a cell), and maybe you like her, and ten to one she hates the sight of your ears....*She* needs the lights to study when *you* need the lights to study.... Sometimes you are thankful there's a rule about the last nights at 10:30... when you can curl into bed and forget it all.... And then along comes the Supt. (whose own life is no cinch) and she makes the rounds with a flashlight, which goes bang into your face to make sure you are you.... For it has been known that a girl will hot-heel it from room to room ahead of the Supt. and lie in two or three beds to pretend the rightful occupant is where she should be....

Then you start another day.

Up at six... and maybe it's cold.... God, I've been cold, shivering into my clothes, my eyes heavy.... Or maybe it's so hot that the walls of your little room seem to perspire... and you think of the smell of blood on hot days, and the way patients will toss and moan and call for ice.... On duty at seven sharp, and for a week or two you're on this floor, and then you're swapped to another floor to learn about other diseases.... Meanwhile you rush to lectures, and do your best to stay awake, and remember it all.... Most of the lectures are given by the Supt. while

you are a Prob.... On practical nursing and hospital etiquette, etc.... (Later you get lectures on everything from the head doctor to the front doorman.)... Meanwhile it's enough to learn the care of a patient and a sick room.... "Place for everything, remember."... "Miss Hart, show me how you make a soap solution...."

Hospital etiquette.... Might as well learn and remember. ...A senior walks in front of you, and you get up when she comes in...and don't sit down until the Queen squats.... Don't eat a mouthful if the Supt. is in the dining-room, until she is served first.... Never leave a patient alone with a doctor while he makes an exam.... No, never do that.... He might be compromised by the patient. Or vice versa. Anyway don't leave him alone with a female.... Keep your patient covered when he is around. ...Let's be modest...let's be neat.... Keep a straight face. ...Go to meet the doctor when he comes into a ward and make the rounds with him. Keep a screen around the bed of any patient that is officiating.... Don't speak out of turn.... Don't speak at all.... Yes, sir.... Yes, sir.... Yes, sir.... Yes, sir....

In between you stagger down to lunch around twelve and it's all done cafeteria style, and it's never what you wish it was, and the monotony of the food *does* get your goat.... And then hurry back to hear some more about what you shouldn't do; trying to ignore the through-and-through stares of the old nurses who hate your hide because you don't ever do things right, and thanking God when you find a kind and helpful one....

Then you limp down to supper which is the same as lunch, the only difference being that the clock says 5 or 6 P.M.... When you get eased up a bit and know things, you take advantage of the diet kitchen on each floor, where you may keep milk and bread to toast, and marmalade maybe, or a bit of cheese.... Because if you have any loose change you can bring in stuff to eat, providing you never leave any around.... Mostly you haven't any loose change, though.... Except the rich girls.... And not often you are lucky enough to room with one.... Maybe you've felt badly when you've sent things to a friend or a relative that couldn't enjoy them. And your sick friend merely hands it over to her nurse. Most people get mad at that. But you shouldn't. You don't know what it means to those poor devils of nurses to get something decent or grand to eat. I'll never forget one patient I had whose daughter brought her squab!

The most difficult thing to face in a hospital is meeting and accommodating yourself to the hundreds of different types of people — from doctors and patients down to your fellow nurses.... These gals, particularly, are your life and your world, and generally they are a stiff potion to swallow. Because, they are a special breed to begin with, I think. No matter how idealistic they may be to start with, they become calloused from the day-to-day association with knives and blood and filth and pain... especially since they must harden themselves to their emotions and gaze upon mangled masses of flesh without feeling.... A big crust of protective indifference forms around their sen-

timentalities, and gradually they become resentful or bitter, or supercilious, or superior to the poor dubs that got themselves into that condition. It's a fiendish joke — half of the time. Personally I believe that most of the men and women who go into this line have a sadistic trend to begin with.... We need great surgeons and doctors, and God knows we need capable and tender nurses.... But only a certain slice of human beings go in for such close association with agony. There must be a streak in a certain class of people that makes them feel at home with blood — from butchers, and slaughter-house adepts, up to the greatest surgeon of them all.... Not that there is anything necessarily despicable in such a charge. There is a certain æsthetic value in horror.

The nurses are the most pathetic of all. With a ten per cent exception, of course. For the most part the nurses are a picky, and finicky, and peculiar lot. Gossip is rampant. Little, unimportant mean gossip. Under their breath. Behind closed doors. A masonry between them. The majority of these women are half starved. For beauty. For loveliness and laughter. It's surprising too, how many old maids there are among the nurses. I think the average is greater than any other woman's profession I know about. There is so damnably little opportunity for romance, for meeting men worth while — who take you seriously. The orderlies are impossible. The internes are generally out for moneyed girls, for they must face the dreadful years of starving before they can become a doctor — and then they have all

the expense and gamble of fitting up their offices and getting started in the community.

The nurses are all right for them to have fun with, and give a run-around.... But most of them concentrate on their women patients — the wealthy ones, or the old ones that can be wheedled and flattered into giving them presents — anything from theater tickets, or a new fall hat, to a check for fifty dollars "for all the sympathetic care and extra trouble they've taken." Ha, ha, ha.... Please pass the gravy.... And the internes ( who are living on twenty-five a month at first, and a hundred a month later; from which they must buy anything they want or go without ), often feed these lady patients with hardship stories, and sob ballads, and the "struggling folks back home" and the grand ambitions for the future, and "it seems too silly to be talking like this; I never talk to any one about such things, but then I seldom meet a person as understanding or interested as you are, Mrs. Pennyante...."

The doctors seldom notice the nurses. They have bigger fish to fry. They consider the nurses mere automatons, for the most part. Half menial and half mechanical dummies that obeys orders.... Not but what the doctors and internes and all the rest frequently try to get away with as much as they can.... Just as much as they can....

Then, there are left only the men patients for the nurses to ponder on. And if they are rich, they kid the life out of you. And if they are poor they build a big romance around you, and "always have a soft spot in their hearts" for you remembering certain unmentionable and thrilling episodes

that certainly weren't thrilling to you.... Half of them think you're an easy and safe bed-companion. The other half think you're a glorified servant.... Most of them are married anyway.... A good eighty-five per cent of the men who land in hospitals are married....

And so it goes — and where shall we look for the moonlight and roses?

Most of the nurses of my experience that actually landed a marriage, went right back to work again, bag in hand, before a week or so was up. They only get the kind that can't support a house well enough to pass up $56 a week extra income.... In all my ten years, I've only known of one girl who married a doctor and lives on Park Avenue with a car of her own.... And she was fairly well-to-do at the start. Oh, yes, I knew of another who was in love with an interne, and who came to train in the same hospital he was in. She worked for two years at it — so that when he really got started she knew all about his work and could help him.... I've heard of several rich marriages — of nurses marrying doctors or patients — but I haven't seen them. And seeing's believing.

Anyway, romance gets trained out of you. You've got so many rules and such dreadful hateful punishments, if you look cross-eyed at a man, sick or well, or if you laugh and joke, or get a reputation of meeting internes on the outside.... And then, the cheap way most of them from the top doctor down to the patient looks upon you.... Either as a Robot or as an easy skirt.... It gets under your

skin, and you never think of yourself as grand or attractive or ripe or luscious....

I have known some girls to face the gaff just so long, and then in desperation go the whole hog with a vengeance.... Working her men patients as the internes work the wealthy women patients — only the nurse has to do more than chuck them under the chin, and give them an extra squeeze.... There are some bad nurses, just as there are bad teachers and lawyers and ministers.... I've known a nurse to dizzy a patient into leaving her half of his will — another who married an old guy eighty-three, who only lived a month after the marriage.... And I have known several who were sent out on wild cases (when men call up for a nurse thinking it's a trick way of getting a girl), and who salted him down good and plenty with the threat of a suit.... There is one agency I know of that has a line of these girls... sent out on any call, regardless of knowing the "doctor's" name.... The only trouble is that it is a close-mouthed secret, and many times a girl who never dreams of such a thing is sent out on such a mission.... Once I was sent like that — to a hotel room on 45th Street.... But the man who could corner me has to think fast.... And when this customer got slimy-eyed, and locked the door, I calmly picked up a box of matches while his back was turned and set fire to the curtains and the bed.... You can well understand that I got out without any trouble or difficulty. And with plenty of curses. The hotel saw to it that I got a check for three hundred and fifty dollars afterward. Though I didn't dream of trying

to get anything. I was satisfied to get out.... I got *my* initiation good and proper when I was nineteen years old. With a spell of gonorrhea for seven months afterward.... Dr. Beaston it was who saved my reason and my complexion.... And never could any one pull either muscle or mush on me again....

The hardest person a Prob has to face, however, is her Superintendent. She is the whole front and rear Admiral of the Navel.... You better not get her against you, if you know your prescriptions.... Mostly, they are pretty swell, because it's their duty to be severe and some of them get just as fed up with it as you do. They are only human. Sometimes, however, they are female Tartars.... A regular Catherine the Great (with frequently the same noted tendencies, too).... And most of them have their pets....

Their pets are of many colors. You bring your trunk in with you — anything you want — and the more you have the more they think of you, like any other place in this doddering old world.... Some of the girls are very high-class, and some are quite rich. Naturally they can honey up the Superintendent and make life less difficult for her. ... Other "favorites of the harem" are the tale-tellers who run and babble everything they see, damn them.... (But believe me, if they are hep with the Supt. for this, they get their dark brown medicine from the proletariat!) ... And the other way of being a pet is by holding a high record and giving the Supt. no trouble, and making yourself the saint's harp....

Then there are Supervisors of the floor. And they are

generally she-devils. But you can never complain about them no matter what. They have just enough authority to go to their heads; and to give them their dues, they have to deal with some mean babies.... You get changed from floor to floor, from ward to ward, and when you land on a new floor there is a riot. "My God," she yells and wrings her hands. "Another new bunch? Now I can't take my time off. I have to whip these dubs into shape...." Which makes you feel like a worm until you get used to it.... Then she turns to you like you had a disease, and says, "What's your name? And what floor are you from? And what can you do, if anything?"... So you tell her, and still she isn't satisfied.... Because her main idea is that you know nothing and never will know anything.... And she's the one who gives most of the punishment so she can get you to wipe dishes and scrub instruments for her....

In most hospitals nowadays you don't have to do any floor scrubbing or dusting, or cleaning of walls. The ward maid does that. She is generally a poor old crone, half starved, eager to tell you her history, who gets fifty a month and board. But she has to room out.... Or in some hospitals it's the porters who do all that work....

Most hospitals just take women nurses or men nurses to train. Some of the big ones take both, but they are trained separate and live separate, except once in a while you have some lectures together.... The male nurses are a lark.... Most of them are weak sisters.... And a lot of

them are thata way.... In fact, you can have the male nurses, I don't want them....

But as usual in this life, they get more money in the end than the girls get. Crazy, isn't it? They get ten dollars a day and ten a night, straight. On private cases we girl nurses get seven in the hospital (including our food), and eight dollars a day or night in a private home.... On contagious or infectious cases we get ten dollars. And we generally have to accept those too, or get in bad with the Supt. who hands out the jobs.... But we don't have to take syphilis cases unless we choose. Generally the male nurses are put on those.... It's a funny thing about contagious cases, though, how seldom a nurse or a doctor catches the disease. Of course, I've known plenty who have caught them — good. But for the most part it never affects you. I don't believe it's only because of all the precautions we are taught to take it. I believe that we get every disease we ever have to handle — not actually, but psychically.... I know, with each new disease I've studied, I've been through all the pains and aches and fevers of it for days at a time — just in my imagination. Maybe that's a crazy theory, but I've heard lots of doctors and nurses agree with it. And it's a sort of preventive somehow; we've "had" that disease and we're really immune to it....

After three or four months of being a Prob, you get your examinations. That's when the fun begins. I'll never forget how I suffered during the "week of silence" that always follows the exams, waiting to know if Dr. Beaston would be ashamed or proud of me. (As a matter of fact

I only caught a glimpse of him twice in all the four months of being a Prob. And when I passed my exams I don't think he was either proud or ashamed so's you'd notice it. He had practically forgotten I was on earth. I never really met him face to face again until I was in the operating room — helping him! )

There may be sixty girls as probs, and maybe only twenty are kept on for real training. The others may be kicked out. Or told to try again in the next class. Or try another hospital if she wishes. Or maybe the girl herself is screaming crying with nerves, saying she hates it and can't get out quick enough. I've even seen girls who *passed* act like that — and quit!

Then comes the day when the average marks are on the board in the dining-room.... And then the exercises in the nurses' dining-room, when the girls who have passed, march to a platform where sits the Superintendent, and maybe a doctor if they can lasso one, and you get your cap and white bib.... And long speeches about noble things....

Then comes the thrilling moment, when all together, as in one voice, you recite aloud the Florence Nightingale Pledge, and I've yet to find the girl who didn't feel a fire of sacred resolution and a dimness in her eyes as she stood, speaking clearly with the others —

*"I solemnly pledge myself — before God — and in the presence of this assembly — to pass my life in purity — and to practice my profession faithfully. I will abstain from whatever is deleterious — and mischievous — and will not take, or knowingly administer — any harmful drug. I will*

*do — all in my power — to elevate the standard of my profession, — and will hold in confidence — all personal matters — committed to my keeping; — and all family affairs — coming to my knowledge — in the practice — of my calling. With loyalty — will I endeavor — to aid the physician in his work — and devote myself — to the welfare — of those committed to my care."—*

These words many forget. (And oh, how many know nothing of Florence Nightingale or her life or her great work except in a vague way!) But many others hug them close to their hearts and repeat them often, for courage and for peace....I know I have....And when I first recited those words with the rest of my class, and first pinned on my white cap, I knew there was no turning back, no regret, no complaint against a life that meant honor as well as hardship, faith and love as well as horror and sin. The world is what it is. We must learn to face, to accept — and to help make it better when we can.

That night there is a big party. The seniors give it to you, and all the boys can come, even the internes, and the dining-room is decorated with paper and leaves maybe, and you dance until twelve, and have ice cream and cake....And you pick your class colors....Our colors were purple and white....

And the next day you go back to work. And you don't realize it's the same old grind, because now you're all fired up with enthusiasm and excitement and pride....Only they expect more of you now that you're a pupil nurse instead of a Prob....And you have examinations every

month... tons of books to buy and study.... Anatomy, physiology, chemistry, materia medica, surgery, orthopedic, operating room technique, medical diseases, obstetrics, pediatrics. Physiotherapy, and hydrotherapy.... Later, because I was interested, and wanted to get all I could, I was permitted to spend a month in the Pathological Laboratory, where the girls from Hunter College study, and where I learned bacteriology, and how to take blood counts, and blood cultures, and clotting time.... It was not a necessary part of my training.... But through Dr. Beaston, after I was all finished with my regular work, I was admitted for a month....

Now you begin to get working experience. With a vengeance! My first shift was a shock — I started in the surgical ward, where for two months in the male and two months in the female sections, I learned the dressing of wounds, and how to move a patient.

Then I got into the children's ward, and that was such a relief, I loved it. I've always loved taking care of children best. They are so much sweeter than grown-ups, and they really love you, and are genuinely grateful.... And sometimes they shout with joy when you come in at morning, or cuddle to you while they cry.... Poor little pets, helpless, with crippled legs, or spinal curvatures, or accidents or infections... or perhaps measles, or only tonsils or appendix.... The infectious are blocked off in one part of a ward, or generally they are in a room by themselves... generally there are about four scarlet fevers to one nurse in a room... and a room for mumps, etc. These are called

isolation cases, and there are special isolation wards or wings in the hospitals.

I hated to leave the children at the end of my four months, but the next wasn't so bad. It was the medical ward, where again I had two months with males and two with the females; and give me the females any time with all their ego and all their gab. Men are impossible to please — and most are ticklish to handle. Here again there were many isolation cases — and some general. Pneumonia, heart cases, skin trouble, rheumatism, kidney, St. Vitus Dance, sleeping sickness.... I well remember that ward because it was the first time I got into real trouble; and it gnawed at my conscience for years after.... I spoiled a couple of kidney cases before the x-ray.... I gave the wrong hypo. And one of them died two weeks later.... I was suspended two weeks, and then was made do *five* months, night duty, instead of the three months' night-duty a year (all at one time), that a nurse is supposed to put through.... I had so much night duty that maybe I got used to the idea, and that's what made me a night nurse after I got out.

But one of the commonest, and to me most horrible, of cases are the Incompletes — who are women whose pregnancy has been halted... either by a miscarriage (many of them actually forced by the woman herself in most gruelling ways!), or by abortions that have been performed by themselves or by certain doctors or midwives.... And when the abortion goes wrong, or the women get scared, or some complication arises, they al-

ways rush madly to the hospital in the hope of being saved. Generally they are neurotics of the worst type, and I have to force myself to have patience with them.... I don't know how many times, when I've taken a tiny little baby body — perhaps only five or six inches long — away gingerly, to be put in a labortaory jar, that I've had to curb myself from speaking a piece of my outraged and riotous mind.... I happen to love children with an intense devotion.... I don't care whether the poor little morsels are clean or scabbed, black or white... I just can't help feeling sorry for them and loving their soft little antics.... I've never had a kid of my own... maybe I never will....

The month I liked best of all in training was the one spent in the Obstetric Ward — not because of the mothers, because they are very wearing and are generally talkative, self-centered and overdramatic. (We have, as part of our training, to make a certain number of deliveries ourselves — just so we would be capable in case of any emergency in our careers.) But I loved the rows upon rows of tiny new-comers, and I loved the time spent in taking care of them.... Putting the little name-chain around their necks first thing and tagging their cribs with a number... wondering what their name would be... and what kind of a home it was going into.... So many I would know were minus a home, or a papa... so many others whose parents were too haggard and whipped to feel much tinge of joy at its arrival... and so many who were a disappointment because they happened to be a girl instead of a boy....

After that I was put into the Dispensary Clinic for two months and then into the Emergency.

The Emergency was the most exciting two months I'd ever known. It's a great experience, because you're likely to handle anything. It's interesting and quick work, and it gives you a staggering insight into the vagaries of human nature. Accident cases are admitted there, and you treat them up quick. You never keep patients in the Emergency. They are sent right off to whatever ward they belong,—or mostly sent right up to the operating room. But you admit them there, and take their histories, etc. Maybe some one is shot, and ten minutes later a drunk is brought in, or somebody is badly burned or run over.... And there is where the police bring their prisoners who are hurt. We have to treat immediately any one that the police bring in.... And if they are badly hurt, they are locked in the prison ward; and an officer keeps watch over that always, and locks and unlocks the doors every time the doctor or nurse has to go in. As soon as he (or she—for there are many women prisoners) is well enough, he is taken out and hauled down to court or jail....

Then, I went to the operating room. That is the grand aim of all the nurses. To get into the operating room. And generally as soon as they get in, their grand aim is to get out.... I myself fainted twice before I ever went through with an operation. They always have an old timer all ready to shove into your place in case you get woozy.... You're in that amphitheater—gruesome, unbelievable silent, and awe-striking, all day long for three months,

with sometimes from five to twenty-two operations a day — one after another.... Anything from boils, to Cæsarean, or fractures, or appendix, or mastoid.... Anything at all....

At first, you are kept around making dressings and learning how to sterilize— and getting used to the atmosphere. ... You make all your own dressings, on a big table, cutting the gauze and folding it ... small wipes, and large wipes ... sponges, tape pads, combines, mastoid dressings, eye dressings.... And you must never speak a word, and strangely enough you never want to in there.... Although some of the internes joke, and are as much at home as in the second row of a Ziegfeld show....

There is a huge balcony running around the operating room, where the internes sit and watch an operation — to learn things.... And generally the surgeon, while he is operating, is talking constantly, explaining what he is doing, and how he is doing it and why he isn't doing this and that.... Dr. Beaston will never talk like that. He operates, and when it is over he explains what he did. That's one reason why many of the internes resent him — they feel they can't learn as much.... But Dr. Beaston should care. When he operates, he has eyes and ears and lips only for his fingers.... The world has dropped away from him, and only the body beneath his touch is in existence.... I think that's what makes him such a great man — but maybe I'm wrong....

The preparation for an operation is a terrific undertaking, and takes nearly an hour.... Except some emergency cases when you have only 20 minutes to prepare.... After

you have all your dressings, instruments, and bandages ready, you have to prepare yourself. You must scrub your hands and arms, and put them through chlorinated lime and soda bicarb... and then all your hands and arms up to the elbows in bichloride of mercury solution... and then alcohol... and then sterile powder... and then sterile gloves.... (No wonder that nurses have hands like a scrub-woman.)... Of course, after all that, you can't touch anything, and the utility nurse ties on your stiff white gown and adjusts your cap, which covers all your hair, and the mask of gauze that covers all your face, except your eyes — you even breathe through it.... And then you're ready with your heart beating, and your fingers and ear tips cold with nerves, and your wipes and sponges counted and laid, dozen by dozen, in sections on your trays.... If you start to cough, or sneeze or if you begin to go faint, you're pulled right out, and another girl is standing ready, all scrubbed up and keyed to the case, to take your place....

My first case was really a baptism of fire.... A woman who had come in through the Emergency was rushed directly up to the operating room.... She had tried to commit suicide by swallowing razor blades, and had actually taken three.... I almost can't blame myself for fainting....

They saved that woman! How, is one of the mysteries of medical science that I've never understood; and I've always regretted not having seen that operation.... As a matter of fact, the woman took iodine three months later and really died. (Suicides are always the very *worst*

cases to handle, because they don't want to live and because they are so resentfully conscious of the fact that they deliberately caused their own suffering and mutilation.... Incidentally, religious people are always the *best* and *easiest* to take care of, for they have something on which to rely —a fortification and acceptance of the inevitable.)

My second case was almost as bad....For the operating room was like some black dream of hell....I was scared anyway, because I felt so ashamed of having fainted the last time....It was a goiter case, and those are always difficult because of the danger of strangulation....Almost never is any outsider allowed in the operating room, but this time a brother of the patient was permitted in to watch....I don't know what his pull was....And in addition to some eighteen internes, there were about twenty students from Cornell around the balcony of that amphitheater in the grand stand for pupils—all wearing white caps and gowns, and looking like some ghoulish jury of life and death, breathlessly attentive to pronounce their sentence....

I fainted again. Just turned over inside....

And one hour after I came to, they had me back at the operating table! A very good way to handle me....It's like falling off a horse. If you get right back on the horse, you're all right....And this time, I saw it through.... Because it was Dr. Beaston performing the operation! I knew it, and I could recognize him in spite of the ghastly mask of white that almost obliterated his face....He wasn't even aware of my presence....Even if he looked

at me, I doubt if he would have recognized me, so little had he seen me in all my time of training.... But that didn't matter.... I kept my wits electric with determination to see it through.... And every time I wavered, I would look at his eyes, so fiery in their solemn concentration; his hands calm and steady, with their long and knowing rubber fingers....

That too was a painful experience, because it was a most delicate and important operation.... A tumor on the brain ... and I think the most haunting and unforgettable sound in the world is that hollow moment when they crack through the skull.... Silent was Dr. Beaston throughout, and I think that helped.... Only the threatening tick of the huge clock high up on the balcony ... and the short clipped words of the anesthesists reporting every few moments, ordering when to stop operating, or when to give oxygen....

One hour and five minutes that operation took, with the sweat pouring down Dr. Beaston's face, and being wiped off silently by a utility nurse nearby.... One of the greatest operations he ever performed — and not as much as the clearing of a throat from the onlookers, pale and grim up in the balcony....

When at last it was over, Dr. Beaston straightened up, and hunched his shoulders round and round to start circulation.... His arms moving slowly in the air — in and out, to ease the strain of taut muscles.... And then he cleared his throat, and took off his mask.... His eyes were smoldering and alive, but his lips were as pale as the

patient on the table.... He began to talk, his excited restrained voice belying the weary and drawn lines in his face as he explained in detail.... Even while I was tearing off my gloves I listened — stupefied by the miracle of the process he was describing.... Not one soul present was watching the patient who was being wheeled off to his room. All were intent on Dr. Beaston's words, conscious of the huge wet blotches of perspiration that made his heavy white coat cling to his back and arms....

When he and his assistants went into the dressing room for a shower and clothes, I was glad of the feverish activity that was the aftermath of the case. I was scrubbing the operating table with lysol, when Dr. Beaston came out again — faultlessly groomed as usual, his face quiet and his color normal.... But when he turned to his assistants and the nurses, with an approving look, and thanked us with a short earnest compliment, a hot moistness came to my eyes.... I felt terribly like crying that time, just from sheer nerves....

Within two hours I was back at the operating table, this time for an appendicitis.

A doctor named Ripley was performing, and the operation was slight and of little consequence.... Again I had an experience I shall never forget, for I hadn't been wised up to the trick.... Dr. Ripley took it into his head to put a few of the bloody sponges under the lap sheet, hiding them from us, just before he was going to suture up the patient.... I had counted so carefully, and reported six dozen and four.... The poor nurse on the other side could only

account for six dozen and one.... She kept signaling me frantically with her fingers held up, and I kept recounting what was left and signaling back in a panic....

"Count your sponges," Dr. Ripley snapped angrily. "Count again quickly."

For some time he kept us frightened like that — but fortunately for our skins we were both adamant. I *knew* I had handed him six dozen and four.... I knew I had! So finally, with a smile of approval, he withdrew the missing sponges from under the lap sheet, and complimented us....

"Tried to catch you," he explained with a self-satisfied little smile, and never did I quite hate a man so much as in that moment.

Although, to do him justice, he was wise to stage such a problem, for in that way he tested our responsibility and our judgment in the face of a critical moment. Many's the neat trick the doctors have of making sure the nurses are alert, capable and dependable....

My operating experience had begun with a vengeance, at last — and it was fortunate, because that Beaston case would have been about the last chance they'd have given me.... If I had quit, I could never really graduate, and could never have been a registered nurse....

From then on, I was in the operating room for ninety days without let-up.... And I had to be on call at night at any time.... If you get a night call after twelve you are permitted to sleep until nine in the morning.... But if you finish, and are out of the operating room even by

*five minutes of twelve,* you still have to be up and on duty at seven!

During my fourth week, I had my final shock. A death in the operating room! So seldom does this happen nowadays that it is the undercurrent of whispered horror through the hospital for twenty-four hours thereafter.... A doctor doesn't take any risk.... He's rather careful that the patient is fit for an operation, and they have the length of the patient's endurance pretty accurately measured.... Death *after* an operation is not so rare, but death *during* an operation has come within my knowledge only three times in all the years I was connected with the Downtown.... Fortunately I experienced only one. That was what put the finishing touches on the hard shell that I was carefully and rapidly growing around my sensitivities....

A woman with an enlarged thyroid... pronounced dead after eighteen minutes under the anesthetic.... And the word was spoken in a muffled choked voice by the doctor, while his assistants stood rigid with the shock, and the balcony bent forward taut, eyes stretched.... Only a fraction of a moment did we stand, paralyzed with the realization....

A spasm of concern, and a wild electric hope shot through the six white figures around the table.... One test after another.... Every possible process to start breathing again by some Samsonian miracle.... Not until everything was done did the operating surgeon straighten up, beaten, and tear off his mask.... His lips forming the

word "Dead" again, without a sound coming from them....

A curt direction — and action once more, swift and intent.... A sheet thrown over somebody's wife, while we worked rapidly, tearing off our gloves and masks, and bundling up every shred and crumb of linen in use to be taken away.... Every instrument gathered from the table, disappearing under quick fingers like rain-drops on a pavement under the hot sun.... Taken to a huge washer, to be boiled for twenty minutes.... The corpse was swung over to a wheeling pallet and taken off — down to the morgue, underground in the hospital.... Not a word was spoken.... The doctors left to face their report of failure, while we bent breathlessly in our haste to clean the entire place... with nobody's eyes daring to meet another, and not so much as a whisper to rival the ticking of the clock and the scuffling feet of those leaving the balcony....

Thank God, I never had to face another operating death! That was my final test — the last nail knocked down into the tight box of self-control and calm, unruffled acceptance of whatever might happen....

So it went on... ceaselessly... each day a drama apart — to somebody else! With doctors to admire or despise, nurses who disappointed or inspired, and patients who made one feel infinitesimal with their troubles and problems... and with patients who occasionally broke down your reserve so that your heart ached and the tears came along with mumbled prayers.... And visitors who aggravated you and your patient, making life that more

difficult and complicated.... More and more responsiblity. ... More and more vital meaning to the days and nights of standing by bedsides....

Until the day when I graduated. My two years and eight months were completed, with a high record.... And in the living room of the nurses' home, I marched with the rest of my class up to the platform where sat the faculty, to be handed my diploma.... Wearing, for the first time, the white uniform that was to be my life's garb, hardly earned.... Listening to the kind congratulations of the doctors and the Superintendent, and turning to make my bow to the audience — which last was merely a gesture, for except those connected with the hospital who had learned to like me, not a single soul was in that audience to wish me well! Not a relative, nor a friend to clap....

Three prizes were given out to the three outstanding graduates. Finch got a set of medical books, another girl got a fitted nurses' bag, and I received a set of instruments, which I prize to this day.... And which somehow made it less pointed that no one had sent me flowers.... After all, who was there to send me flowers?

Later, we sang hymns, our voices lifting with the glorious thrill of accomplishment and freedom.... Freedom that meant new fetters and new responsibilities.... And after that we gave a play, the senior class, mimicking some of the foibles of our superiors, and some of the outstanding incidents of the past few months — to the delighted appreciation of the older nurses and the doctors....

We danced that night — in our uniforms. And during

that dance I sneaked aside to open my diploma so that I might gloat over its unarguable security....

But when I rolled it open—it was blank! *Blank!* And a feeling of futility stole over me....As if some one had played one joke too many....And the music didn't seem so gay, nor the shrill voices so happy....

I didn't quite realize how much more there would be to becoming a nurse! A few days later, for the sum of $5 I received my *real* diploma, duly made out and signed, impressive enough to suit any one. I had to write to Albany then, giving my training and diploma number, and Albany sent me a letter permitting me to take State Board Exams. To City Hall I went, bringing the diploma and the letter from Albany, and arrangements were made for the examinations to be held a week later in the Central Opera House.

Five days of examinations! Fifteen dollars and five days of insistent and relentless proof that you are worthy of being called a nurse. Five examinations on each of the five days! Plus being sent to strange hospitals ( where you don't know the rules ) to work for one to six hours at whatever assignments may be given you!

The examinations over, you are left to suck your thumb. Three months, and sometimes longer, before you know whether or not you have passed these examinations. In the meantime you may go for a vacation or a trip. Or you may, if you are starving like I was, take up duties as a graduate in your home hospital (providing they have room for you) at $90 a month and your keep—working in one of the wards.

At length you get a certificate for which you pay $5, and for which you thank your God. The number of this certificate you post hot-haste to Albany, along with a dollar, and finally you get your registration card! *You are a registered nurse, at last!* Nor is anything more precious than the little card that gets crumby and lifeless in your purse as you tote it around wherever you may go:—

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
STATE BOARD OF NURSE EXAMINERS

Cashier's No. 000000 1929–30

This is to certify that LORA HART R.N., of New York County, N. Y., has met with the requirements of the law and is entitled to this

**Certificate of Registration for 1929—1930**

This certificate, dated September, 1929, expires on August 31, 1930.

JAMES SULLIVAN
*Assistant Commissioner for Higher and Professional Education*

HARRIET BAILEY
*Secretary of Board*

(OVER)

(This Harriet Bailey, by the way, who signs your registration card, is one of the idols of the Nursing Profession. The Florence Nightingale of our country, she is admired, revered and loved by every nurse I've ever known. Born in Maine, of a wealthy lawyer father, Miss Bailey graduated

from Johns Hopkins — the finest and most outstanding hospital in the U. S. A.— and has made it her mission to know every hospital in the country. A fine and inspiring looking woman.... All my life, as a nurse, I've heard stories of how Miss Bailey went out on charity cases, taking care of the needy, going into homes that most would hesitate to enter. Never once has she taken money for her services — and too numerous for mention are her gifts and donations — as unending as her own tireless energy and her unflagging sympathy and understanding.)

Every year, for another dollar, this card is renewed. Too bad more private patients in homes do not ask to see this registered card.... Too bad more people in authority, who *should* know *better,* don't demand the card as a nurse enters a hospital or a registry — accepting, so often, a card one or two or three years old! Too bad, as well, that there is no disgrace that will deprive a nurse of her right to a registered card, barring her from practice of *any* sort! Often girls are barred from this or that hospital, or blackballed by a doctor who has every justified right to keep her from jobs! Once in a dog's life, a girl will actually be barred from the state. But she may go and take examinations elsewhere and once more practice. There are bad girls in any and all professions. There are nurses who are far from trustworthy, nurses who have made narcotics of patients, who have deliberately misused their positions, who have shrewdly and cunningly disgraced their noble profession....

For so little a thing as running a car, a driver's license

may be revoked! Yet a nurse has a human life in her hands —the power of horror and tragedy, pain and agony; or comfort, strength and new hope to a weary soul....

We all make mistakes. It is never too late to make atonement for one's life, or try anew to make ourselves worthy. Even a doctor (in shocking and appalling cases) can be disbarred from the medical profession. By what right is a nurse immune, after she leaves the vigilance of a hospital, to be sure of her life's work, when that work involves the very breath of some man, woman or child?

I sat watching Vivian Finch as she talked about the West Side Hospital, and her trials and tribulations.... And the outstanding joy of the past week when a patient had given her a small pearl pin for being particularly kind....

And I watched Finch, listening with squirrel eyes, as if Vivian were a nut to be stored away for the winter... nodding, frowning, smiling, breaking in with advice and admonitions....

And I didn't say anything.... Because my own mind was filled with memories....

A rat-tat-tat of doorbell ringing broke in on the discussion, however. Vivian's friends were playing a drum-beat on the front door, and Finch jumped to her feet complaining that they'd put our bell out of order....

In a streak, Vivian slid over to the door. And her two guests breezed into our apartment like they had paid the lease for it.... We found our evening was going to be a regular spree....

Stanley Forbes — the interne Vivian had shyly told us about — came first, with another interne named Howard Reggs. Howard Reggs was about that high; and simply smiled and looked; but Stanley Forbes was a big handsome who was just the kind they tell about.... I could see Finch disapproved of him at once, and I could see the kid was just nuts about him, the little fool....

Stanley Forbes was very, very attentive to his friend Reggs, and I hooked together the whys and wherefores by a few neat questions deftly placed.... Reggs was worth a fortune, and came from a Gramercy Park family, and Stanley was the house doctor, with Reggs under him. So he was showing Reggs the works, and Reggs thought Stanley a little tin god, and it didn't hurt Stanley's feelings a bit as he didn't know where his next overcoat was coming from....

They wanted more girls. We put our foot down. But still they wanted more girls.... Or else they wanted to go out and dance.... Finch didn't approve.... I was determined I would never be a nurse again, so I didn't care.... Viv was tearing to go.... She hadn't been out to a dance since she was six, she said, and she and Stanley put up such a holler about it, we had to say yes to dancing....

But Finch is cagey.... So she called up her steady, who is a cop, and asked him to come along with us.... She didn't want any shinanigans, and always felt safer when Jack Doogan was along.... Jack is a nice kind of a cop, so nobody objected to his being around.... We told him where to meet us... and then we got ready to start off....

Viv was anxious to hurry, because, like Cinderella, she had to be back at the hospital by twelve....

I went into my room with Finch to put on my things, and I heard the doorbell ring, but paid no attention. Viv came in to me a few moments later with an envelope in her hand....

"A man just left this at the door for you," says Viv, all of a hurry.

"What?"

I took the letter, puzzled. It was a big square envelope of very heavy coffee-colored paper, with a big brassy handwriting that made my name look important....

"Who left it?" I demanded.

"A big man, with a black mustache," Viv said.

"Didn't he say anything?" snapped Finch.

"Just asked if Lora lived here, and said to give it to her."

I nodded. I had my ideas. I tore open the envelope slowly. Yes, it was from Mrs. Richey....A check dropped out. I picked it up. I didn't look at it. I knew it was my pay.

Instead, I read the letter:

"My dear Miss Hart:

"I am sorry you left my children's case, because my little ones are quite fond of you. I am sorry, too, that you had so much trouble last night at our house. I realize that I owe you not only for your night's work, but for all that you did to help me when I came home ill. I've been told about it, and from what I gather I'm quite certain that you saved my life. I want you to know I appreciate your help and

care. Please accept the enclosed check as a slight sign of my realization of all that you've done. I know it is something I can't really repay you for.

"Very sincerely yours,
"Mrs. Letitia Richey."

"Huh!" I grunted, and turned the letter over to Finch who was watching me, beady eyed.

"She's no fool," said Finch. "Is she?"

"No," I said. "She's no fool. But she might have sent it over by somebody but that chauffeur. It would have pleased me better."

"Looks to me like he was the one who got her to do it," decided Finch thoughtfully. "Or — maybe the drunk. What was his name?"

"Mr. Hunter."

"Yeh. Maybe he's ashamed of himself. Maybe he's afraid you might peep. "

"Maybe," I said sharply, "Dr. Ranger himself said something!"

I sat down thoughtfully and took the letter back from Finch. I began to read it again.

"How much is the check for?" Finch demanded with a prying tone.

I broke off from the letter, and turned the check over. I read it. Gasped. Squinted. And read it again.

"Holy Mary!" I said. "It's for a hundred dollars!"

# *Chapter Five*

I SLEPT the next morning until the phone woke me at half-past ten. Partying the night before had been quite strenuous. ... We had gone to a little place on Eighty-sixth Street, near Third Avenue, where they served beer, and sang songs all together, beating the time with their feet.... Very gay and uncensorable ... Vivian had danced her ankles swollen with Stanley Forbes, the big handsome.... And once or twice with Howard Reggs.... Reggs, poor parsnip, would sit for the most part watching Vivian with adoring eyes, while Stanley whirled her around like she was made for his particular joy....

Later, Stanley had usurped the piano stool, and had played a lot of old army songs with the orchestra following him — mostly the drum.... And then he had played a song we all loved ... and I'll never forget him sitting there, head stretched around to face the tables, a frenzied look on his smooth, self-confident face, and a wailing note in his full lilting voice....

*I went down to St. James Infirmary...*
*Saw my — sweet-tie there*
*Laying on a long white table...*
*So cold — so white — so fair....*

*Let her go — let her go — God bless her —*
*Wherever she may be —*
*She can search the wide world over —*
*And she'll never find a sweet man like me...*

*When I die, dress me in straight lace shoes,*
*Box-back coat and a Stetson hat;*
*Hang a twenty-dollar gold piece on my watch chain*
*So the boys will know I died standing pat....*

It was a great song. Practically the whole restaurant was singing it — with gestures. But Jack Doogan, Finch's perfectly nice cop, got to crying into his beer, and Finch made Stanley stop.

I wasn't used to parties, and I enjoyed it — especially since Reggs kept telling me how nice I looked in the green satin dress.... By midnight I had forgotten the Richeys and their problems — as if it had all happened a year ago....

But the phone kept jangling in my sleepy ears the next morning and when I crawled to it, with my bathrobe only half on, I heard Maloney's voice — very irritable.

"For the love of God, Hart," she whined, "I can't do a thing with these children."

"What children?" I asked sleepily.

"The Richey kids," she snapped back. "Listen, did you promise them some sweet peas and pansies?"

I blinked, and gave up trying to open my eyes.

"Why — yeah."

"Well, I wish you'd bring them over. The kids are all weepy about it.... Listen — their mother is going to be out to lunch.... Can't you bring the flowers over then?"

"Sure. Tell them I'll come," I agreed, and hung up.

I was fully awake by then, and fully aware of the time. Nurses are as clever at a quick change as most actresses, and within twenty minutes I had taken a shower, dressed, and was breakfasting on a bowl of shredded wheat and milk, when my doorbell rang, and Mortimer Finley came in.

"What's the big idea?" he demanded when he saw my soup plate of breakfast on the table. "Say, you come on out with me and let me watch you put away some hot coffee, and strawberries, and an omelet."

"That sounds awfully good," I agreed, and put on my hat, obediently.

I smiled at him through the mirror. A nice, stocky person, full of freckles, with naughty blue eyes, and a very grim mouth. But not exactly my type....

"I've got a favor to ask of you, Lora," he said with a shy earnestness.

"So? I have a favor to ask of you."

"Yours is granted."

"I've got to stop and buy some flowers for some sick children I know."

"Easy. Lora, you're awfully nice...."

"Are you all ready?"

He stepped back and fiddled with his hat, grinning.

"What happened to your chin?"

"The landlord came to collect the rent." I put my hand up and felt my jaw carefully.

"You're a nice one!"

"So are you. What about that breakfast?"

At breakfast, in Childs' at the Ansonia, Mortimer broached his favor.

"My sister is scared silly and doesn't want to go to a doctor."

I finished the last of my omelet thoughtfully.

"Is she really your sister?" I asked.

"Well, if she isn't, some one played a dirty trick on Maw."

"And so—?"

"Well," Mortimer poured me some more coffee, "Mona hasn't been as careful as she might have been.... You see, I'm really the model of the family."

"I see. All *you* do is go out after dark and get shot in the left thigh!"

Mortimer grinned, and his freckles stretched.

"Well, Mona is in a devil of a fix. Her husband has been on the road for the last five months. He's a salesman. Now he's coming home in about a week, and how can Mona explain..."

"A little stranger?"

"Lora. You're so knowing."

"My mind works fast after coffee. What do you want me to do? Have the child for her?"

"No — not exactly."

"That's a help."

He kept looking at me and his blue eyes were sassy. But his mouth was stern. I felt sorry for Mortimer. Still, he didn't mean anything in my life.

"I don't really ask you to do anything, Lora," he said quietly. "I just promised Mona I'd speak to you about it."

"Well, now you've spoken to me about it."

I pushed back my plate and began to put on my gloves. Mortimer got up, flipped a coin on the table, and took the check. He lifted his coat and hat from the peg near by, and walked over to the cashier's desk without a word. I walked after him, watching him pay.

"I'm sorry I spoke about it, Lora," he said when we got out.

"Don't be crazy. I'm sorry I can't help, that's all. But I can't."

"Couldn't you even tell her something she could take?"

"Sure. Plenty of sleep and rest, and fresh air and exercise."

He frowned.

"You're not offended?"

"Of course not. Are you?"

"No.... You couldn't even tell her somebody to go to? You must know such people. A doctor I could trust?"

"Never heard of such an animal."

He laughed. And we walked on. We came to a florist,

and went in. I selected two bunches of pansies, and two of sweet peas, and fell in love with two little pots of geraniums.

Mortimer paid for the whole collection, and the florist carried them out to Mortimer's car.

I climbed in and settled myself. Eyeing a passing woman who had a nice satiny caracul coat . . . wishing I had a nice satiny caracul coat. . . .

"Where do the kids live?" asked Mortimer as he pulled on his driving gloves.

I told him the number on Riverside Drive.

"Right on our way out into the country."

We drove along, slowly.

"See that tub out there near the dock?" Mortimer nudged me as we stopped for a red light. I looked over to a huge old sailing vessel leaning lazily up against a wharf. "That's a speakeasy!"

"They'll be having them in church next," I shook my head.

Mortimer enjoyed that. He loves to ruffle me about prohibition.

"Oh, they have already," he corrected me. "That little church up on S——— Street."

I threw him a look.

"You don't like my business, do you?" he teased. "Look under your seat and see my gun, Lora. You might at least admire my gun."

I wouldn't bite.

"Why should I object to your business?" I said coolly. "It's awfully good for my country."

"You're an American."

"I am not. I'm a Canadian."

"Didn't you ever take out your papers?"

"No. And I never will."

"You won't have to. When you marry Lester you'll be an American automatically."

"Maybe just for that I won't marry him."

"How is Lester?"

"He is all right."

"Isn't he jealous of me?"

"Are you jealous of him?"

"No. I don't take him seriously."

"Well, he feels the same way about you."

We drew up to the apartment house, and Mortimer got the doorman to carry my geranium pots for me. I promised not to be long, and went up to the Richey apartment.

"I thought you'd never come," Maloney greeted me.

"What's the matter?"

"All they do is yell for you. When they found you hadn't come last night, they nearly had a fit!"

I went past her and down the corridor to the kids' room. I opened the door.

A squeal went up from Desney who spied me first. And then little Nanny, her face flushed and swollen with tears, struggled upright and put out her arms to me. My heart gave a tug, and my throat got knotty. I went over and held her close.

"What do you mean by crying?" I scolded them. "Is that any way? Making yourself sicker? You don't love me at all."

"Oh, I do, Miss Hart. I do." Desney tugged at my sleeve.

"Not if you cry like that. I want you to get well."

I unwrapped the sweet peas, all fresh and lavender; and Desney's fingers trembled over the string on the pansies. Maloney helped her.

"Look — from her window box.... Look, Nanny!"

"That's nothing," I scoffed. "I brought you some plants — for your own windows."

I tore off the paper from the geraniums and the two kids clapped their hands excitedly. The pink flowers swayed as if nodding heads.

"You can't have them," said Maloney suddenly, "unless you promise to drink your egg-nogs."

"That's right," I nodded. "And listen here to me. If you don't do what Miss Maloney says, your flowers will all die. And the plants will wither."

"Oh, we'll drink it. Won't we, Nanny?" Desney promised elaborately.

"Well, let me see you. I'll stay while you drink the egg-nog."

Maloney went off to get the glasses, and I sat on the side of Desney's bed. She had a fever. I could see it.

"When are you coming back to us, Miss Hart?" she pleaded.

"I don't think I can come back," I said slowly.

"Oh, please. Please, Miss Hart. Please come back to us...."

Nanny it was, who pulled herself up to her feet in her bed, trying to walk over to me. I caught her as she lost her balance, and held her tight.... Her little cheek burning through my dress.... The baby... the poor little baby....

Maloney came in with the drinks — scolding pleasantly. I tucked Nanny up again; patting her pillows behind her.

"I'll come back," I promised. And I meant it. "But only if you're good. Drink up now, and listen to me. Don't drink too fast. Now, if you are nice to Miss Maloney, and do everything she says, I'll come back to you."

"When?" choked Desney as she forced down a big swallow of the egg-nog. "To-night?"

"No. Not to-night. But maybe to-morrow night. Or the night after that. Only if you're good. And when I come back, I'll bring you *real* window boxes. And we'll plant things in them."

Nanny, who had been watching me, her thin little hands grasping the egg-nog, turned at this promise, and began to drink. Her little eyes closed wearily.

"Do you promise?" Desney demanded.

"Yes," I said. "I promise. Word of honor. If you're good."

They couldn't finish the egg-nog. A few mouthfuls were as much as any human being would ask them to manage. Maloney took their glasses, and stalked off to the kitchen.

"Lie back now, and go to sleep," I said, fixing up their covers comfortably. "It's time for your afternoon nap. And

when you wake up, Miss Maloney will have the flower pots on the window sill for you."

"I want my pansies," murmured Nanny hoarsely. "I want my pansies to go to sleep with."

I plucked a few of the blossoms from the bunch, and put them into her hand.

"You're almost asleep already," I laughed. "You be good, and remember that Miss Hart loves you. And she'll be back very soon—one of these nights."

They turned over, as Maloney drew the shades. Nanny s eyes were closed contentedly. But Desney kept watching me with a heavy-lidded stare.

I blew her a kiss, and she smiled.

Then I went out with Maloney.

In the hall she turned to me.

"Lora," she said, "if you have any feeling in you, you'll come back to these children."

"I intend to. I don't know how. But I promised them."

"The housekeeper talked with me this morning," Maloney whispered as we walked to the door. "She wants you back, because the kids keep crying for you, and she's sick of it. I think the mother is a bit scared about you, and I don't think Dr. Ranger likes you any too well."

"I don't think he does," I agreed grimly.

"Listen," said Maloney. "You're going to keep that hundred dollars the mother sent you, aren't you? Because you would offend her terribly if you didn't — and then she'd never let you come back again."

"I'll think about it," I nodded. "I'll find some way.

Maybe I'll go talk to Dr. Ranger. I'm going to help those poor babies, if I can."

Maloney, ringing for the elevator, smiled.

"Never going to be a nurse again!" She echoed my vicious tone of the night before.

"It's true," I nodded. "After I save those kids. But I'll do that — if it's the last thing I ever accomplish."

"I'm with you there," Maloney grew serious again. "But it's hopeless. They'll never pull through."

The elevator door slid open, and Maloney nodded a curt good-by, turning hurriedly back into the apartment. All the way down, and out to the street her words kept ringing in my ears.... They'll never pull through.... They'll never pull through.... A shudder ran through me.... I could feel their thin hot little arms around me....

At the curb, I found Mortimer's car without any Mortimer. I climbed in and waited — thinking. There must be some way of winning Dr. Ranger, and getting into his good graces again.... I tried remembering what I knew about him.... He worked like a stoker, I'd hand him that much.... He had an extremely attractive and extravagant wife.... Which was probably the reason he always looked so gnawed and filed....

What could I do to make him trust me again? How could I divert his suspicions....

Mortimer broke in on my perplexity. Came and opened the door of the car, a cigar in his mouth, and a pained desperate look in his blue eyes.

"Sorry, Lora. Didn't think I'd be so long."

"What's the matter with you, Mortie?"

He leaned back and puffed laboriously at the cigar. It smelled nice. I liked the whiff of a cigar in a cold autumn day, out in the open. He drew on his gloves. and planked his heel on the self-starter.

"I was phoning my sister," he said.

"Oh."

He glanced at me helplessly.

"She's blabbing about suicide."

"The fool."

"God, I wish you could do something for her, Lora."

I studied him. He looked so damned helpless and pathetic. I took a deep breath.

"All right. I will."

"You mean it, Lora?"

I nodded.

"Take me over to see her," I suggested quietly. "I'll fix her up."

"Lord, I'll do anything for you—"

"Never mind, Mortie."

He started up the car, a new spring to his movements.

"You know," he told me quietly as he drove off, "she's just twenty. And only been married a year. It's tough on the kid. Being left alone like that while he's on the road for months at a time. Six weeks away, and home two weeks, and then off for another month. She's mad about him, too."

"Oh, she is?"

"You said it. The folks were furious that they got mar-

ried, but Mona doesn't care. She won't take a cent from them, because they were so rotten insulting. And he won't take a cent from me because he doesn't approve of my way of making money. It's a laugh, isn't it?"

"Rip-snorting."

"But she stands by what he says — mostly. She does take a few presents from me, and he doesn't like that any too well. He's one of these upright citizens."

He went on telling me more about this only sister of his, and by the time we reached her tacky little apartment on West 110th Street, I was pretty well prepared for what I met.

Mona was just what Mortie had said. Only a kid. Slight, boyish, short black hair, and a spoiled baby face. She was awfully shy at meeting me. And she'd been drinking. All alone by herself. She offered us some, but we both refused. Mortie never touched liquor. He disapproved of it.

I took her inside, to talk to her. Her bedroom was cute. Small, with green walls, and little splashy chintz curtains and splashy chintz spread. Nice and neat and gaudy, with a thick smell of powders and perfumes and chocolates.... Huge bunches of artificial tulips in yellow pottery vases at each window sill.

She told me all about it. I remembered back when I was nineteen, and had that terrible siege....I told her about it. How much better off she was, and how she could just as easily have had gonorrhea instead of a baby....

She sat back and cried, and the more she cried the more I talked to her. She had brought her high-ball along

with her, and it helped her swallow some of the tears. I insisted she should tell me everything. I had to ask a lot of questions.

I gave her an examination. Then I told her all about things. I described various ways and means and possibilities — explaining the percentage of risks in each case.

We were together about an hour.

She was terribly shaken. Her frenzy of the past four days had left her wrecked. So when I left, she stayed in the bedroom and asked me to say good-by to her brother for her.

So Mortimer and I left. When we got back into the car, we started up Riverside Drive, slowly.

"Well?" he said at last.

"I'm not supposed to talk to you," I grinned. "It's unprofessional."

"My left foot!" he snorted.

"But everything is settled," I assured him.

"What do you mean?"

"Your sister is going to have her baby."

"My God! You mean she's got to? It's too late?"

"No. She doesn't *got* to. She wants to."

"But — "

"Little boys shouldn't worry their heads about such things."

"Well, if you don't tell me, she will."

We stopped again in traffic lights, and Mortie turned to me a ruddy and incredible face.

I laughed.

"Mortie," I said solemnly, "you don't know women."

"No?" he parried irritably. "Well, I know husbands. And I particularly know Mona's husband. He's a swell fellow, Lora, but he's something of a cluck. He may be a traveling salesman, but believe me he's capable of running a Sunday School. He's very religious, he's straight-laced, he's idealistic, hard-working and honest as a die. What's more, he's mad about Mona."

"Well, you've sold me on him completely," I jibed.

"Now you sell me on something," he countered. "How the hell is Mona going to have a baby and expect a man like that to swallow it?"

"I don't like your question. It's unpleasant. Nobody's going to ask him to swallow the baby."

Mortie snorted, and threw the car into second speed. We started up with a jerk.

"I thought you were going to help," he mumbled angrily.

"Listen here," I said, sitting upright and talking right at his freckled profile. "I am helping. The best way. Your sister Mona is a good kid. She really loves her saint of a husband—"

"I know she does. She's nuts about him."

"And she really wants a baby!" I added. "It isn't that she wants to get rid of the baby. The only worry in her mind is how she's going to explain it to Sir Galahad."

"You're not telling me anything."

"Well, at least you see I have the problem straight," I shrugged sarcastic like. "I've told her how to have it, and

how to make her husband accept it. What more do you want?"

"And how is it going to be done?"

"With your money."

He threw me a bewildered look.

"You know I'd pay anything in the world for Mona's peace of mind."

"You're going to. Like a nice uncle, you're going to pay for your little nephew's entrance into this rather worthless world. We'll let Mona's husband pay the regular bills. You'll do all the extras, and he needn't know about it. As for his accepting a child that curiously enough is only in its fourth month of development, according to her dates, when the good man has been away for *five* months—"

"Yes? Now, you interest me."

"Well, I can manage it, I'm sure. I'm going to take Mona to a doctor who will permit us to say she came to him shortly after hubby left town. Pre-dating things, as it were. Mona didn't write her husband because she wasn't sure at first—and then, she wanted to surprise him. Wives love to surprise. Ever notice?"

Mortie drew up to a curb and lit a cigarette carefully.

"Gosh," he sighed explosively. "Can that be done?"

"Anything can be done," I assured him. "If one doctor doesn't do it, another will. I'll fix it. She says it happened around the first week in July. We can handle it. It will be a pretty 'late' baby, as far as he's concerned. See what I mean?"

Mortimer gazed at his cigarette fondly.

"You see, Mortie," I continued seriously. "No doctor approves of an abortion. Very few will handle one. Not the kind of doctors I care to know, anyway. And the real doctors would rather go to any extreme than countenance one. Or even know about it. It jars them. Like rustling poison liquor would jar you. You must have *your* professional pride, too?"

Mortie grinned.

"A doctor will generally do anything to help a woman rather than force her into a tragedy — or an abortion. Her lies and her tricks don't interest them. All they want is for her to have her baby. Provided, of course — "

"I knew there would be a joker," Mortimer said.

"Well, nobody would like to be caught in such a lie. We can fix it so that he'll be covered, no matter whether Mona gets hysterical and confesses, or not. But at the same time, I'd like to guarantee protection."

"Well, rather. You can count on that."

"I thought so. Mona will be so damn grateful she won't make a fool of herself."

"What ought it to cost?"

"Mortie! What a tone of voice. I'll have you know that doctors don't take bribes. The sort of doctor I'm associated with would do it as a humane gesture — or not at all."

"Gee. That's swell."

"The case itself, however, may be costly," I added quickly. "Remember, Mortie, this will be a rather unusually delayed delivery. See what I mean? According to our story the baby should be due some time next March. Ac-

cording to facts, it probably won't be delivered until April. You can see for yourself that Mona is going to have what is known as a hard time. A very alarming case — such a lengthy delay! She may have to go — for appearance sake — to the hospital five or six weeks sooner than really necessary. In order to convince her hubby that the delay is actually serious. After all, a whole month's difference *must* be convincing. Maybe she'd be lucky enough to have a seven-month child! Who can tell? But it won't be any joke to handle if it's normal."

"I get you. A lot of fandangles. I get you." Mortie tossed his cigarette out thoughtlessly on the drying leaves that swirled about our car in the November winds. "Well, it's okey with me. I'll grease the wheels."

He started up again; but I changed my mind about going to the country.

"You'd better take me back," I said slowly. "I have a terrible lot of things to do, Mortie. We'll go to the country tomorrow or the next day. I've got to see a doctor for Mona, to begin with."

We argued the point, wasting a lot of good breath, and finally Mortie turned me around and headed for Dr. Ranger's office. Discussing Mona and her problem. The more he played with the idea, the more convinced Mortie was that I had saved the family honor. At the curb, outside Ranger's office, he stopped. He took his check book out of his pocket.

"Listen, Lora," he said quietly. "I'll give you a check for a thousand dollars. To cover all extra expenses so

Mona's husband will only know of the regular ones. If you need another thousand, just say the word."

"No," I shook my head. "Wait till I talk with the doctor first. Then you can make it out to him."

"I can't tell you how I appreciate it. You know, I think the baby will do a lot for Mona. Fill up her spare time, and give her something to love and fuss over while her husband's away. He'll be terribly happy, too. Terribly. Poor devil! I wonder how many women turn such a trick?"

That remark of Mortie's stuck in my mind. It was there when I bid good-by to him and promised to let him know about the doctor. It was there, when, in Dr. Ranger's office, I found I had to wait a considerable and edgy period.... Why wasn't the easiest way out of a problem as good as any? Hurting the least number of people? Why ruin a bunch of lives, particularly when the people love each other? And when a solution, such as I had suggested, and such as was happening every day, could make everybody happy and safe? What was better, in the long run? An unpardonable and tragic truth, or a comfortable and secure lie? It was too deep for me....One of those cases where whatever you did would be wrong....Only maybe one wrong might be less violent and disrupting than another.

When at last I was shown into Dr. Ranger's stolid office, he looked grayer and duller than ever...a mist of pervading impenetrable loneliness always seemed to hang over the man. Grand and exciting things might happen to other people. But nothing grand would ever happen to him.

He had accustomed himself to the idea... and was a bit sorry....

He looked at me with a sharpness in his doleful eyes.

"Well, Miss Hart?"

"I wouldn't have disturbed you, Dr. Ranger," I began, not sitting down, "except that I have two rather important things to speak to you about."

He gazed at the shiny button on my two-year-old fall coat disapprovingly, but said nothing.

"To begin with," I cleared my throat resolutely, "I'm rather ashamed about getting so mad yesterday at the Richey family. I can see now that it wasn't any of my business."

I hurried my words, because I could see he was becoming restless and bored.

"And besides," I went on, "I don't think things were as bad as I made out. It was just a nasty combination of events. Mrs. Richey sent me a very kind letter of apology. A very lovely letter. I'm sure I misjudged the woman. And she sent me a check for all my trouble. A check for a hundred dollars!"

Ranger glanced up, and his dull eyes were as shrewd as a cat's.

"Of course, I wouldn't take any such money," I laughed uneasily. "I'll subtract my night's pay, and I'm going to let Mrs. Richey treat the children's ward at the St. George to ice cream with the rest. Her *own* children were at the St. George once!"

He leaned back in his swivel chair, and thrust his thumbs

into his pants pockets. His smile was pathetic. His next words showed me he hadn't got my point....

"Not many women would pass up a hundred dollars for herself."

"Well, I don't feel I earned it. I wouldn't return it to Mrs. Richey, because it might hurt her feelings, and I'm sure she meant the best in the world. She doesn't need the money. And ice cream will mean a lot to those poor kids at the hospital."

He nodded. His eyes wandered out the window. I felt he wasn't thinking about me at all.

I sat down on the chair opposite his desk.

"There is another matter, doctor," I began carefully. "A pregnancy case of a friend of mine that I wish you would handle."

His eyes turned back on me dryly.

"It's really a friend of a friend of mine," I laughed, with nice embarrassment. "Her husband hasn't much money, but her brother is willing to pay *anything* to help her through. He offered me a check for a thousand dollars just before I came in here. To cover extra expenses. So that his sister's husband would only pay the normal costs. He said he'd have another thousand any time it was necessary. You see, his sister is in a particularly disagreeable and pathetic mess. She thought she wanted an abortion performed. I talked her out of that this morning. She's willing to go through with having the baby. Really *wants* the baby. If it can be done so her husband won't suspect any irregularities. Her brother, Mortimer Finley, was at the

St. George Hospital twice on different occasions. He knows what a marvelous doctor you are. He says he'd give the world if you'd handle his sister's case. He'd feel so safe knowing *you* were seeing it through. Really, he just worships you, Dr. Ranger. But he was too embarrassed to come and talk to you himself."

Ranger's tired eyes softened slightly. But not so his lips.

"It isn't the husband's child. Is that it?"

"That's it. And the real father is married — and has a nice family of his own."

His office nurse came in and laid a chart on Dr. Ranger's desk. He threw it a lazy glance, and directed her to prepare a lady for a sunray treatment. As soon as his nurse had left the office, he turned to me.

"Who is the real father?" he grunted. And I breathed easily for the first time.

"I don't think she'd want me to tell."

"Nonsense. I've got to know all about the case if I should take it. I'd want to test the father, that's all. Give him the Wasserman test. I wouldn't take the case otherwise. I never do. I can handle him, all right. Whatever I know is sacred. His priest would tell on him quicker than I would."

He smiled then. A chalky smile.

"Well," I thought quickly. "Suppose you don't let the mother know you're seeing the real father? Suppose we do it through Mr. Finley, the brother? I think he might manage it."

"Good." He took up a pencil and wrote the name of

Mortimer Finley on his pad. "When he calls I'll consider handling it. I'll talk to Mr. Finley myself."

"Oh, Dr. Ranger. That's so good of you. I had so hoped you'd help."

He grimaced.

"I'm so sorry for the poor woman," I added, feeling I had gone too far with the flattery. "She's in such distress. She really loves her husband, you see."

"I can imagine!" he nodded curtly. "You go in a lot for feeling sorry about people, don't you, Miss Hart?"

I bit my lip.

"It's a weakness of mine, I guess. Maybe it's what keeps me from being a really good nurse."

"It's what keeps you from being a perfect nurse," he said slowly. "You're far too intelligent. Otherwise you're one of the best nurses I know."

"That's praise from Cæsar."

"Cæsar be damned," he snorted with something close to a human smile. "A man who wrote volumes on wars—when he had a subject like Cleopatra to tell about!"

He laughed along with me, appreciating his own humor. But there was something more than humor in his remark. And something less than amusement in his laughter.

I stood up.

"By the way, Miss Hart," Ranger wiped his mouth slowly with the palm of his hand, as if erasing his laugh. "Why wouldn't you consider going back to the Richey children? They've been begging for you."

"I went to see them this morning," I said quickly. "I

brought them some flowers I had promised them. They wanted me to come back. But I didn't take it seriously."

"Why not? You'll have no trouble, I can promise you. Mrs. Richey was inconsolable about the difficulties you had suffered in her house. As you say, the woman means the best in the world. She *is* a lady. Besides, I'd really like to have you there. I think you can handle the children as no one else can."

"Well, of course, Dr. Ranger, if you wish it. Of course, I'll go back."

"Good girl. Start to-morrow night."

We looked straight at each other for a moment. I think we both felt as if we understood each other. I wonder if he was as wrong as I was?

"By the way," he said slowly, his eyes dropping to his ink-well. "Did you know that Mrs. Richey and her brother-in-law are going to Europe?"

"No."

"Yes. They're leaving after Thanksgiving. And taking their car and the chauffeur."

I caught my breath.

"Must be nice to be rich," I said casually.

He laughed.

And his eyes lifted to my face again, with as close to a friendly glance as I had ever known from Dr. Ranger.

"If I were you," he smiled, "I'd go out and buy myself a nice new coat with that hundred dollars. I'll get Mrs. Richey to treat the children's ward to ice-cream."

My skin prickled. I looked down at my shabby coat, and made a wry face.

"Maybe you're right," I said ruefully.

"Get a blue one," he suggested. Then he suddenly caught himself. "Mrs. Ranger knows a wholesale place," he added patronizingly. "I'll get her to send you an introduction."

"Thank you, doctor. That's mighty kind of you," I said.

And I left.

# *Chapter Six*

I MET Lester at five-thirty that evening, and we had dinner together in a little tea room down in the Village. Lester hadn't much money, but he was one for beauty, and music. He adored music. He'd go without food — without a date with me for a week — just to attend one of the concerts at Carnegie. In the summer, he hung around the Stadium concerts practically every night. He played a little himself. The violin. Not very well. But he loved his fiddle.

Lester couldn't stand a restaurant that had shiny tables, and was big and crowded, and smelled of food. "The incense of a stomach cathedral," he called it. He liked to go to little places that had color, and table cloths, and some kind of an orchestra.

His hair was as red as a hearthstone. Red and gleaming and waved, over a pale dreamy face. Always his linen was fresh, his collars like a neat white fence around his throat.

He was the kind who was made for tuxedos, and cut-

aways, and country estates, and a valet; smooth-running cars, and long tables with finely embroidered cloths, and tall lighted candles....

But Lester hadn't any of those things. He had forty-five dollars a week with a chemical company that kept him on while they tested out a process he had developed. And almost every cent of the forty-five dollars he spent on further laboratory experiments. Except what he paid for the concerts.

Girls meant nothing to Lester. He always said "there would be plenty of time for that later on," when he made his pile. He was sure of making that pile. As a matter of course. Because he was so steadfastly sure of his work. Already he had devised a process of making a new stainless iodine. The big chemical firm down town was testing it. They had been testing it all the past hot summer. They probably would be testing it all the coming cold winter. Testing meant a great many things. But that didn't worry Lester. He knew his process was perfect. He was willing to wait.

If he had given them a tumble, girls would have made fools of themselves over Lester. Like me. I would have died for him — gladly. Girls were forever throwing themselves at his head. Turning to look at him on the street. While he walked on, unseeing, unaware.... He didn't relish girls. Thought they were mostly "cheap imitations of womanhood," cheaters, thin-skinned....

Once in a while, however, he would admit a girl to his thoughtful world. Mostly because he hungered for com-

panionship. For some one to listen — and care. Some one to laugh with. Some one to mother him....

That was my specialty. I mothered him. I was only a year older than Lester, but that didn't matter. I'd scold him, and he'd love it. I'd go down and dig him out of his laboratory, and drag him out to eat and take some exercise. I made him join a swimming pool. I'd go to concerts with him and stand until my feet sprouted roots into the floor beneath — listening to notes that all sounded alike to me. Watching the rapture of his face — that took him far distant miles away from me.... Going out in the crowds afterward, wise enough to keep silent as I fell into step. Walking in the dusk before supper, up from Carnegie into the Park. Where at length Lester would take off his hat, and the gleam of twilight would rest on his shining red hair, and the cars of wealthy New Yorkers would rush by unheeding, while Lester threw back his head and said — as he always said —

"Some people say there isn't a God, Lora."

Then he would laugh. And I'd forget the ache of my feet from standing up during the concert....

He kissed me one evening in the Park like that — just after he had laughed because some people said there isn't a God....

And one evening, just like that, he had turned on me, white-faced and said:

"I wish you'd go home — or go anywhere! I want to be alone."

I went. And didn't speak to him for days. Lester had a

hell of a temper, and was as headstrong and unreasoning as a nasty brat sometimes. As a relief from being humble and patient with the world and its big chemical companies, I suppose. Once I got to understand him, I never felt angry with Lester. Sore as the devil, but never really angry. Sore enough, fortunately, to scrap with him until the feathers flew — which was a great delight to Lester. He loved a good mean scrap....

He drank too, Lester did. Nor could I stop him. For that matter, I had absolutely no influence on Lester. He drank pretty near anything that was in liquid form. Why he never became ill, or never was disgustingly tight, I couldn't figure out. The more he drank the whiter he became, and his hair seemed redder by contrast. His eyes got polished and jumpy and nothing could beat his tongue for sarcasm and withering opinions on this here now world.... Generally, when he was on a drinking bout, I'd get up and go home — and he'd never know the difference....

But I loved him. Because I couldn't help it.

That evening, after my fairly successful tussle with Dr. Ranger, and after I had phoned Mortimer the results, Lester was in a particularly benign mood.

"Ask me," he said as soon as he met me, "what news I've had from the jury room?"

I stared at him. I had long since left off asking Lester whether his iodine process had passed the sublime judgment of the chemical experts who were considering it....

But now his eyes were soft and gleaming, and his smile was bright.

"Oh, Lester! Have you heard?"

"Not a God-damn word," he reported gleefully. "Not a murmur. I couldn't find out if I was Mr. Burns himself just what stage the test is in. It is my opinion, Lora, that they've lost my iodine, and my mountains of neatly written and bound claims. It occurs to me that even should they find the dusty and long-forgotten business, they wouldn't realize it was my property. I even think they've forgotten that I work for them down there. So let's go and celebrate!"

"Never mind. They'll surprise you one of these days."

"When I'm hollow-cheeked and weak-minded from old age, perhaps. Since we're to be married, Lora, *if* and *when* my process is accepted, how will you feel about my being hollow-cheeked and weak-minded from old age?"

"I'll be that way too. Because I'm going to wait for you, you know. You can't scare me off."

"What a lovely couple we'll make, Lora. Mr. and Mrs. Sucker!"

"You make love so beautifully, Lester."

He laughed and squeezed my arm.

"Never mind, button face. I'll deck you down with imitation pearls yet."

"Well, I could use a kiss in the meantime."

Outside the tea room, regardless of others who were making for the entrance door, Lester stopped and kissed me resoundingly.

"Now that's got to last you for the evening!" he warned, and opened the door for me.

After supper, Lester took me to a fight in Madison Square Garden. I didn't relish fights any more than I did music, but I liked to hear Lester howl himself hoarse. He had a way of enjoying things. After the fight, we walked for a long time, slowly, and got down around the west side docks. He took me into a clap-trap lunch wagon, and ordered hot hamburgers and coffee for us both. He, who almost never had an appetite, ate prodigiously after midnight. I can see him now, sitting there, his legs wound around the high stool.... After that we wandered some more, enjoying the night breeze, and nosing our way out to the huge piles on the docks, sitting there and looking at the smelly water, and the shadows and the lights of the little tireless ferries.... After which Lester found the market. The huge wagons of fruits and vegetables and flowers that roll into the rickety highway in early morning. We poked around the markets for some time, listening to the drivers swear, and the horses whinnying, and the buyers bid and order delivery; and breathing the reek of fish and onions and oranges and cabbage in the murky darkness....

Lester took me home around half-past four. I was tired, but I was happy. Because at my doorway he held me very close and told me that I wasn't a beauty, but I was the ace-high darling of softish sex....

The next day I spent resting and loafing around. I was

too tired to go driving in the country; and Mortimer had his hands full anyway carting Mona over to see Dr. Ranger and trying to hook the "real father" into submitting to the Wasserman test.

Toward noon, my call came from Dr. Ranger's office asking me to report at the Richey home that evening. Shortly after, I received another phone call that rather surprised me. Mrs. Maxwell—the housekeeper at the Richey home! She said she wanted to make sure that I would be on hand that evening. I said yes, I just had orders from Dr. Ranger's office. I asked after the children, and she said they were "no better and no worse."

No better and no worse, says Mrs. Maxwell. Just like that. About as much interested as an iceman in a fire.

I thought that over as I had a scrambled supper in the apartment by myself. Then I left a note for Finch, telling her I was going back to the Richey case. I knew it would give her a laugh—after my vow to quit nursing. But what did I care?

At seven prompt, I rang the Richey doorbell. Mrs. Maxwell herself opened the door. A plank-shouldered woman with a face all made up like faded wallpaper, and a mouth that made you think she'd been sucking lemons. Her thick-brocaded black silk dress, long-sleeved and high-collared, whispered and gossiped whenever she moved. Whether she had been swiping Mrs. Richey's cosmetics, or whether she had learned the art of make-up by mail order, I couldn't figure out.

"Are you Miss Hart?" she greeted me, and threw her head to one side jerkily as if trying to focus me.

"Yes'm."

"I'm Mrs. Maxwell."

Her voice reminded me of some one... a heavy, authoritative voice with something of a perpetual complaint....

"How do you do, Mrs. Maxwell," I murmured.

"The children certainly will be glad to see you," she said as she walked along beside me down the corridor. "They've been raising a terrible holler. That's bad enough in the day time. We can't have it at night. They're hard to manage."

"Well," I explained confidentially, "sick people are funny. They don't know what they want. Have you ever been ill, Mrs. Maxwell?"

That's as good a question as any for making friends.

"Have I?" she threw me a look like a half dead fish. "Gall stones!"

"Good gracious. You poor soul."

"And once I slipped on an icy street and was two months in the hospital with a broken arm."

"Well! You've been through your plenty, I'll say."

"I've never really been the same. Every time it rains..."

She reached out to the knob of the children's door. On her stumpy right hand was a large diamond ring in an old-fashioned setting....

"Every time it rains," she turned to me mournfully, "I can feel it. I feel it in my bones. Ever since that operation."

"It's often like that," I nodded.

I suddenly remembered what the voice reminded me of! A woman who hated to get up in the morning, and who loved being waited on hand and foot... a handsome, vulgarly attractive woman whose eyes were fevered and covetous... who loved chocolates and wine and good beer ...who married twice, and ran away with a third man, leaving a little girl with a landlady in Astoria, Long Island... without as much as saying good-by....

I caught my breath with the memory....I found I still disliked Mrs. Maxwell, but I no longer feared her....

She had opened the door to the children's room, and entered quietly. Both Nanny and Desney were asleep.

The electric light from the sitting room shone through the open doorway onto their little beds. One of their windows was open, and a curt November wind skirted out the pink and blue silk curtains.

Mrs. Maxwell stalked straight through the room and I followed her.

Maloney, already in her street clothes, was poking in her purse for a nickel subway fare....She glanced up, and spotted me behind the housekeeper. Her eyebrows lifted ever so slightly.

"Good evening, Miss Maloney." I was that polite.

"I'm so glad you've come, Miss Hart," she gives me good manners right back. "I can report well of the children to-night. When I told them this afternoon you were coming, they went to sleep like lambs."

"They slept from exhaustion!" snapped Mrs. Maxwell, as if correcting Maloney.

She glanced at us both, and then went into the tiny kitchen, and began opening and closing doors, peering in to see that everything was as it should be. I turned to Maloney, who never looked at me. I understood then that Mrs. Maxwell was watching us.

"Did you write a report, Miss Maloney?" I asked quietly as I took off my coat and hat.

"Of course I wrote it. It's part of my job to write it, isn't it?" sasses Maloney smartly.

"Well, you needn't take my head off. Where is it?"

Maloney turned and winked, one side of her mouth twitching dangerously.

"It's on the desk," she grunted and buttoned up her coat. "And you'll find everything where it should be in the bathroom and the kitchen. And I hope you don't leave things in the kind of mess you did the other morning!"

"They'll be left as good as I find them."

"That's all I ask. Do you want anything else?"

"No. Don't let me keep you."

"Good night, then. Good night, Mrs. Maxwell."

"Eh? Oh, good night, Miss Maloney." Mrs. Maxwell trekked back to the kitchen doorway. "By the way, Miss Maloney, did you eat all the shredded pineapple?"

"I guess I did," said Maloney, very haughty. "And what's more I'd like to have soup and salad with my dinner. There's no reason why I shouldn't. Well, good night all!"

And without another word, Maloney crossed through

the children's room and left. I watched the flounce of her walk, and the determined set of her shoulders. I realized, to begin with, that she didn't want Mrs. Maxwell to feel the two nurses were *friends*—and secondly, I understood that one way of handling Mrs. Maxwell was to be snooty with her....Maloney had tried to give me a clue....

"Well, the nerve!" choked Mrs. Maxwell as soon as Maloney had left. "I bet she gets better food here than she ever had in her life."

"Maybe that's why she asked for more of it," I smiled knowingly. "Don't mind Miss Maloney. She's a fine *nurse*—but that's about as far as it goes. Know what I mean?"

"I've known it for days," grunted Mrs. Maxwell. "Lord knows what I've had to put up with, ever since those children were brought home. I think we've had eight sets of nurses traipsing in and out of here. And it's all up to me to see that they don't walk off with the silver."

That last crack made me mad. But I just sniffed.

"You, now," the housekeeper looked squarely at me. "You can see what I've been through. From your experiences the other night. I left the house for two days to go to my sister's and that's what happens."

"Oh, that! You don't know how it is in *some* houses, Mrs. Maxwell."

Her eyes calmed down a crumb.

"Ummm," she pursed her sticky red lips. "Well, I got the blame for it. For not being here. For ten years I've been with this family, and I get about as much time off as if I were the clock on the wall. My sister was in trouble,

and I go to her for two days — and look what happens. . . ."

"Please don't let it worry you," I shrugged. "Shall I get dressed in here — or in the bathroom?"

"Oh, I'll be going right along. What I really came to say —"

She paused at the doorway, and turned to me, but her eyes looked beyond me as if dreading to meet my glance.

"What I really wanted to tell you," she repeated slowly, "is that Mrs. Richey would like to see you."

"Mrs. Richey?"

"Yes. She's having dinner now. I'll let you know when."

"Thank you."

When Mrs. Maxwell had taken her highly landscaped visage out into the hallway, I sat down to think over every word she had said. She was a queer old crow. Something tricky about her manner, and her shifting eyes. . . .

So Mrs. Richey wanted to see me, did she?

I got into my uniform slowly, and nosed about the sitting room, trying the different cretonne chairs; and discovering, behind a huge nursery screen, a darling little alcove wherein were diminutive divans and hammocks, and tables and chairs — a sort of miniature sitting-room for children. . . . Yet the place had a forgotten air. . . . As if nobody remembered how long since it had been used by the emaciated and nerve-racked little kids in the beds. . . . I found a picture of the father on the mantelpiece. . . . It said "To my two little princesses, may they live happily ever after, Daddy." . . .

He was a homely man, with almost no hair, and a tiny pointed chin beard. Thin and lean, judging from the unusually elongated head, and the pathetically big ears.... Ears that almost seemed to be parentheses to his face.... His lips were thin and shy, but his smile was loving and gentle and—hopeful, and his eyes were marvelously kind....

A nice daddy....A strange man for that beautiful mother to have married! Was it just for his money?

I sighed, and lit another lamp. The little piano named "Ajax" was locked....I wondered if any one knew where the key was. Lester played the piano. I might get him to come up some evening, when every one was out, and play some music for the kids....Over the piano was a huge framed picture, that required close study....It was a grotesque map—a map of Fairyland—with Cinderella's castle marked out, and Jack's Beanstalk, and The Old Woman's Shoe....A cute thing, in giddy reds and blues and yellows, half faded....

I stumbled over my street shoes, and suddenly realized how I had been snooping. I picked up my clothes, and opened a closet to hang everything away. It was a long sliding closet, that had mirrors in the doors, and a row of elephants and monkeys and ducks painted along the top....I slid it way back—to look. Row upon row of little dresses hung there. Cute little dresses—silk and red and blue and smocked and hand-made....All colors—probably much too small for Nanny now....Probably

she could wear Desney's by now.... Though maybe their sickness had stunted the kids.... Maybe they could still get into the rows and rows of gay little frocks.... On a shelf below was a rack of small shoes.... White with black patent leather bottoms, little red slippers, old and frayed dancing slippers....

I shoved the closet closed, and turned away. I noticed two other closet doors, and decided to investigate. One near the piano was a large door, and it squeaked mightily as I opened it.

A huge closet. Almost as big as the bathroom that Finch and I had in our apartment. And filled to the last nook with toys.... Quoit throwing, and table croquet, and lotto, and paints and crayons... an old-fashioned lantern slide machine, thrown in one corner... a grubby and broken rocking horse, and dolls! Oh, how many dolls! Some pert and frozen-faced, almost new; and others with wigs off, and half their clothes on, and shoes lost, and hands broken.... One doll had fallen face forward into the lap of a teddy bear. A big brown dejected teddy bear, who seemed to ask why the hell he should be on a closet shelf....

I shut that closet too, and slapped my hands together softly to shake off the dust.... Orders were that the children were not to have toys. It excited them! I sniffed. I'd jolly well like to pop a few of those old relics, and watch Nanny and Desney thaw out. Wasn't it better to give them something to think about than to keep them restless and

nervous in the bed — with nothing but their own thoughts and their continual aches?

Yes, I'd jolly well like to let them play with some toys. The trouble was that children would tell. They'd show how pleased or happy they were. And then I'd get in sour with Ranger again, going against his orders.... Maybe when the whole damn family went to Europe....

I went to the third closet door. It wouldn't open. I worked on it softly, putting all my strength into pulling it.

It was locked.

I looked around the room again, thoughtfully. At the tiny brick fireplace that had a huge fence of beaten iron around it, made in the shape of black cats with humped backs, and tails that plumed upward like spikes.... At the rug, that must have been foreign.... It was blue chenille, and in the center was the silhouette in green and yellow of Little Miss Muffet and her fateful spider.... At the charming little roll-top desk beside which hung a dusty blackboard... at the light in the center of the ceiling made like a huge seven-pointed star... at the huge old red leather Morris Chair very much worn in the seat.... Surely Daddy had sat there, bald-headed and smiling, smoking a pipe. I was sure he smoked a pipe....

Presently, I spied a curtain of dull grayish rep. Drawn curtains. I tiptoed over almost as if I were eavesdropping, and pulled the curtains aside a crumb with one finger. Edging it farther open. Braving it out, until at last I realized no one was inside.... I thrust back the curtains and went in.

I stood in the nicest little cubbyhole of a room! With hooked rugs on the gleaming floor, and a neat set of furniture painted an antiqued gray. A shelf of books, a deep comfortable chair with a sewing basket on the table beside it, and French windows opening out onto a porch. Pink and white checked gingham draped the windows and covered the single bed — unusually dainty and attractive because a blue cross-stitch was embroidered in every white square of the gingham.

A room you'd love to live in, if you were lonely, and homeless, and an old maid. A room for the children's governess, no doubt. Deserted now, as was everything in that dainty section set off for the children, like an apartment of their own.

Back into the sitting room I went, and pulled the cord of the chintz draw-curtains and found another French window. I opened the door quietly, and stepped out to the roof porch. The whole city stretched out beneath me, freckled with lights. A huge candlelight moon skimmed smoothly out of a cloud, and went calmly about its business....

The air was too cold to stand there in my uniform. I went back in, and set about my *own* business. Out to the kitchen, where I found a nice chocolate custard that appealed to me and which I ate absent-mindedly as I glanced over the reports and charts....

I prepared a little broth — leaving it all ready to heat up when the children woke, and fixed trays with linen and glazed blue china, and saltines....

Then I went in to look at Desney and Nanny, taking the pillow off Nanny's head again, and settling her back comfortably. She barely stirred as I moved her. They were sleeping profoundly. It was best to let them sleep.

Back in the sitting room, I took up a magazine and tried to read. But I was too busy thinking.

In about half an hour, without so much as a knock, the door to the children's room opened, and Mrs. Maxwell rustled in, her black brocade whining and tattling with each step as she crossed over and beckoned to me. I followed her out into the corridor.

"Mrs. Richey is ready to see you," she told me excitedly.

I nodded, and followed her down the hallway to Mrs. Richey's room. I remembered the last time I entered that boudoir.

Again Mrs. Maxwell's diamond ring flashed as she knocked.

"Come on in!"

The voice was silvery and young and lilting behind that door.

Mrs. Maxwell threw the door open, let me pass before her, and then closed the door again.

I stood before Mrs. Richey — alone.

If I had thought her beautiful when I had seen her prostrate on the floor in an unspeakable condition, I blinked at her loveliness now.

She sat at her vanity, turned about to face me. The straight cap of golden hair gleamed in the light from the rose colored shades all about her. Her face was smooth

and exquisite — the face of a child! A face so like poor little Nanny's that it caught at my heartstrings. A spoiled, naughty face, with a youngster's mouth, and eyes that asked the world to be nice to their owner.

She wore a pale pink dress, with long sleeves, and a very low-cut throat line. A demure and feminine dress of very soft chiffon or georgette. The sleeves had deep deep cuffs — almost up to the elbow — of organdie embroidered with white daisies that had yellow centers and thin green stems.... The neck had a wide bertha collar of the same, also embroidered with daisies....

The dress made me feel gawky. It was so dainty and so refined and so clever — molded snugly around her delicious soft figure, and belted at the waist with a wide pink suede belt.

She was leaning back, studying me cautiously. One hand propped her weight on the vanity bench, and the other hand held a perfume bottle, stopper off. Her knees were crossed, and her free foot was swinging thoughtfully.... No stockings on those ankles — and dainty little high heel shoes of a dusty pink suede to match the dress....

"Oh, you're young!" she said with a quick smile.

I was startled by that greeting.

"You're no older than I am," she added agreeably. "Are you thirty yet?"

I felt myself coloring.

"Not quite. Almost," I said.

She laughed delightedly at that, and turned to pick up the stopper of her perfume bottle.

"I don't blame you for being ashamed," she teased — as if she had known me for years! "Thirty is a wretched age, isn't it? I won't be thirty. I won't ever be thirty. It's neither one thing nor the other. When I get good and ready, I'll be forty. In the meantime I'm going to stay twenty-six. Don't you think I'm wise?"

I wondered if she had been drinking. Such gibberish!

"Come over and sit down," she waved her perfume bottle toward a chair near her. (The rose-colored armchair where Mr. Hunter, the "boy friend" had sprawled and watched me two nights ago.) "I want to talk to you."

"Mrs. Richey," I began as I took the chair she directed, and watched her proceed to anoint herself with the perfume. "I want to thank you for your letter — and the check. It was much too good of you."

"Oh, don't back-slap me!" She frowned in a very pretty annoyance. "I hate people who say what they should. I never say what I should. The check and the letter were very shabby. It was the least I could do. The very least. I must have been a pig that night when I came home. It was *ptomaine!*"

She gazed widely at me. Assuring herself that I completely understood it was *ptomaine* — and not alcohol.

"Ptomaine can be exceedingly dangerous," I said very seriously. "You're lucky to have recovered so quickly."

"Oh, but I'm not over it yet! Really! Look at the circles under my eyes!"

She leaned forward slightly so that I might be impressed

with the circles. She spilt a generous supply of the perfume as she moved.

"Oh, damnation!" she complained petulantly.

I got to my feet.

"What a pity," I said. "I'll wipe it up."

"No — don't. Stella will do it later. But wouldn't that gripe you? A brand new bottle!"

"It's gorgeous perfume too," I sighed as I sat down again.

"Isn't it? Like it? Here — I want you to have the rest of this." She clacked the stopper into the bottle and thrust it out to me. "I'll get you a new bottle too. When I get mine."

"But Mrs. Richey —"

"But I said I wanted you to have it!" She flared a bit imperiously.

I reached out and took it, thanking her in a mumble. I felt as if I were acting at a queen's command.

"It's my favorite perfume," she chattered, amiable once more. "*Toujour Moi!* Know what that means? *Always me!* Remember that. Always me. It's the best little creed any woman could have. Always, always *me!* If it isn't me — it will be the other lady! Haven't you noticed that?"

I laughed awkwardly, and stood up. I didn't know what to say.

She reached out a hand to me suddenly. A small useless hand with a large square diamond on the wedding finger, and a wide diamond bracelet on the wrist above it.

"Well, it's all forgotten about the other night?" she

asked sweetly. "No hard feelings — or nasty opinions?"

"Of course not, Mrs. Richey. I can understand about such things."

"You're a nice girl. I hate to leave bad impressions. My chauffeur had no right not to let you call the doctor. Oh, I heard all about it. He had no right. But the poor man thought he was doing the best."

I sniffed — and nodded agreement.

"What's your name?" she smiled sweetly.

"Miss Hart."

"Nice name. Sweet name. It means so many things, doesn't it? But what is your first name?"

"Lora."

Her face clouded suddenly. And I remembered the little sister that had "died terribly, all runned over" — I was sorry I had been asked my name....

Mrs. Richey turned to her vanity, and busily arranged some of her jars and bowls and bottles....I didn't look at her face through the mirror. I didn't think it was fair.

"It's a nice name," she said quietly. "But I think I'll call you Miss Hart."

*So she cared!* I caught my breath. If the memory of one little girl, dead and buried, hurt — perhaps she really had some feeling for Nanny and Desney....

She turned back to me, picking up a pink chiffon handkerchief and pressing it against her lips gently.

"I think you're a nice girl," she informed me as if she were doing a great honor. "I'm glad you're like you are. I'm so sick of old people around. Almost all the nurses

and things we've had were oldish. I'm not surprised my babies like you so well. They are *very* fond of you, I hear."

"Have you talked with them?"

"No. No, I don't go in to see them. Hardly ever. Because, you see, it upsets me so. I get all unnerved. Why my babies should be so ill and weak, I can't understand. ...I've always been strong as a horse....And besides, it excites them too much when I go in. Their uncle thinks it better to leave them alone. Quiet and serene and undisturbed. I think he's right. You see, he's all I have to depend on now....There's no other man in the house for me to ask advice...."

She studied the pink chiffon handkerchief. No other man in the house? I felt like asking what about the bossy chauffeur?

"Dr. Ranger agrees with him too," she added, and got up, smoothing her frock with both palms of her hands. "It makes me very sad. But I understand they are improving."

"Why not send them to the country, Mrs. Richey?" I dared — wondering if Ranger would like to scalp me if he heard.

"Oh, they're not able to be moved!" She looked at me horrified. "As soon as they are stronger. I can't wait to get them into the country. But it would be a risk now — particularly in this weather. Of course, everything that *can* be done is being done."

There was a dull four-square silence between us. My mind was flying from one question to another.

"But there's one thing, Mrs. Richey — if you don't mind my saying it —"

"No, of course not. I want to do *everything* I can. I want you always to feel you can come to me."

"Well," I plunged headlong. "If you'd come in to see them just once in a while. Just once a day. Oh, do you know how they act when they *don't* see you? That excites them too! They cry pitifully — when they don't see you."

She nodded and sighed heavily.

"Yes. I know that. I know. But then they just cry themselves to sleep. On the other hand, when they *see* me, they get so excited they don't sleep for hours... they get shrill and uncontrollable...."

"But —"

"No," she smiled sadly, her blue eyes soft and resigned. "You haven't been on the case long enough to realize. We've been all through it. And Dr. Ranger knows best. As a matter of fact, that's one of the reasons why I'm going on a trip. That, and my own health. If I'm not even *in* the house, my babies won't be expecting every day to see me. You see?"

I gave up. They had her too beautifully pumped. Maybe later....

"It's a tragedy," she murmured. Then suddenly she braced herself with a deep breath, and held out her ringed hand again. "Anyway, I'm glad we had this talk, Miss Hart. I'm glad you came back to my babies."

"I'm glad too," I said. "Thank you."

She touched an electric bell that was sunk in the center of a huge square of rose quartz on her table.

"I'm going to a play to-night," she smiled at me. "Do you like the theater? I could get you tickets some time, if you enjoy it. You could only go on matinees, couldn't you?"

"Yes — why, thank you, Mrs. Richey."

"Funny — only being able to play in the day time. But I think you're right. If I had to work, I'd find a night job. I would. I'm always my best from six o'clock on. I was made for the night time. I was born at midnight — maybe that's why. Do you believe in such things?"

Her maid had entered. The same woman I had met that morning when Dr. Ranger had sent for a nurse to help with the stomach wash. If she recognized me she didn't show it.

"Stella, get me my caracul — and the new turban that came to-day."

"Yes'm." Stella left.

"Good night, Miss Hart."

"Good night, Mrs. Richey. I hope you enjoy the play."

Out in the corridor, I ran plank into Mrs. Maxwell. Whether she had been listening or laying in wait for me — or both — I couldn't tell.

We stood looking at each other. I, with surprise, and she with a shrewd and calculating study.

"So. She gave you perfume, did she?" Mrs. Maxwell breathed irritably.

"Wasn't it nice of her?" I agreed blandly. "She's such a charming woman."

"Huh!"

She reached out and turned the perfume bottle around in my hand.

"The one I wanted!" she grunted. "I was hoping to get it."

For a moment my lips tightened. Then I laughed.

"You take it," I said, holding out the bottle. "Mrs. Richey promised me another like it."

"She did?" Mrs. Maxwell looked up at me probingly. "Well then, you wouldn't really need this, would you?"

"No. Do take it."

Promptly enough to suit an army captain, Mrs. Maxwell grasped the bottle.

"Nice of you," she said, and marched away.

I walked back toward the children's room slowly. I wanted Mrs. Maxwell to be my friend, but I resented her sudden appropriation of my nice present—

The door of Mrs. Richey's bedroom opened swiftly before I reached the children's room. Mrs. Richey, in a whipped-cream turban of peach chiffon and lace, and a smart light caracul coat trimmed with beige fox, came out into the hall and called my name.

I turned and saw her beckoning to me, a faint naughty smile on her lips.

Puzzled, I went back to the hall toward her. She leaned forward and caught hold of my shoulder. Her breath came in delicious gasps of suppressed laughter.

"Did she take the perfume away?" gurgled Mrs. Richey as if the idea highly entertained her.

I nodded, and smiled too.

"The dirty old politician," she giggled. "Never you mind. I'll get you two bottles. And don't you mind a thing that old buzzard does. Mrs. Maxwell is so dumb she thinks Fannie Ward is part of a hospital!"

Back in the children's room, where I found them still asleep, I went into the bedroom and feasted on my thoughts. Mrs. Richey had fascinated me. One could not help admiring her — delighting in her beauty and in her utter charm. The woman was sticky with money, and the woman was beautiful. Why, then, was she permitting herself to be made a victim of scheming people? The day was going to come when she would land in a sanitarium — or worse. Didn't she see that? Couldn't she realize how she was heading? Was it merely that she was a weak character, spoiled and luxury-loving, who could easily be tricked and misled?

Obviously, Mrs. Richey had not been so long on this downhill slide to wrecked health and lost fortune. She showed no marks to-night of debauch. Such disintegration would be gradual I knew. Her condition the first night I entered that household was unspeakable, and to-night she was as different as two human beings! How long had she been drinking? How long had she left Nanny and Desney to pine away their little lives, making no whole-hearted

attempts to save them, but listening instead to "their uncle"?

And when would I see that uncle? I had felt from the very first that he was at the bottom of all the trouble. His scheme seemed obvious to me. He wanted the Richey fortune — the oil stock — control of the business. So he made love to the beautiful childish widow of his brother as a starter. He fed her with liquor, and excitement, and gradually developed her taste for both.... Perhaps she had never known much excitement or release with the bald-headed husband whose picture stood on the mantel of the children's sitting room before me.... Maybe Uncle Phil intended to marry this woman — and make such a total wreck of her, dulling her perceptibilities and whatever brain she might possess—so that he might have her under his complete control. Her and her estate!

There were three children to claim part of this estate. Two of them he was cleverly and ignominiously leaving to rot. What about the other one? The older child in boarding school? Did he fear the older daughter — or had he already made a pawn of her in some way?

What I could not understand most of all was Mrs. Richey's strange taste in lovers — and her apparent insatiability.... Uncle Phil, perhaps! I hadn't seen him. But what about Bunny Hunter the boy friend who had brought her home as tight as a jail? And what about Nick? Yes, what about him? That huge hulk of a savage with the colossal physique and the grewsome black mustache? I

had seen Mrs. Richey draw his head close, and whisper to him....

What about him? My thoughts ran round and round in crazy circles, getting nowhere....I was glad when Nanny and Desney woke up—and called out to me!

# *Chapter Seven*

The following week brought almost no solution to the many questions I had asked myself about the Richey family. Night after night ticked by. The children obeyed me placidly, listened with wide-eyed attention to the stories I told them, and fell asleep with their hands in mine. There was little or no crying or howling at nights — except when they woke up with bad dreams. So Mrs. Maxwell was silently and snootily satisfied with my influence over them. But the children were *not* improving — and it worried me frightfully.

Meanwhile I had gone to see Dr. Beaston and explained to him that I had returned to the case. He seemed thoroughly interested — and yet he didn't want to show me how interested he was. He told me one thing, however, that strengthened me in my opinion of Uncle Phil's guilt. Beaston told me that the children's father had stipulated in his will that Dr. Beaston was to be the family doctor in any and all matters. Uncle Phil, it seems, was paying

Beaston his fees, according to the will, and engaging Dr. Ranger on the side as his own preference!

Another thing, Dr. Beaston told me.

"Letitia Richey is a crazy little fool," he frowned. "She used to be as nice a girl as you'd want to know. Her husband ruined her. Spoiled her like a prize pup. It all went to her head — society, clothes, jewelry, and all the other insidious and flattering distinctions of sudden wealth. They've only had their pile in the last ten years, you know. Don't think she's all the sweetness and sugar she seems. She's a shrewd woman — for herself!"

I looked at Beaston's clouded face, and remembered Mrs. Richey's creed — *Always Me!*

"I've told her so to her face," Beaston cleared his throat and smiled guiltily at me. "The first time she got sick on that god-damned liquor they feed her, I gave her a bawling out that I thought she'd never forget."

"What did she say?" I smiled.

Dr. Beaston laughed with a deep-chested relish.

"She tried to make love to me!" he admitted with a chuckle.

"Ummm," I sniffed. "You *might* have fallen for her. Think of the good you could have done for the whole family! If you were there now —"

"Be that as it may," Dr. Beaston flipped the ash of a cigar he was enjoying, "I'm old-fashioned enough to prefer doing the seducing myself. I'm quite a stickler on that point."

"I can imagine," I murmured.

"Then, I made a final and unforgivable error," Dr. Beaston grew suddenly grave. "I did something that I never have permitted and never will permit again. I sent my wife over to see Mrs. Richey. We had known them for years. We had been to dinner there often. The father and I were real buddies, you see. So when I left Letitia Richey that night, I asked Mrs. Beaston if she'd try to do something. Try to use her influence. She did try. She's a mighty game sort like that. But it didn't work. And, by God, I'll never try that game again."

"Why? What happened?"

Dr. Beaston scrutinized the growing ash on the end of his cigar. He laughed softly.

"Mrs. Richey converted my wife, instead of my wife influencing Mrs. Richey. Letitia Richey is like that. She had Mrs. Beaston in on a bridge game that cost her two hundred dollars. She took her out to a couple of night clubs — when I was working on a late call. She taught my wife to smoke, and gave Mrs. Beaston a taste for absinthe."

He doused his cigar and laughed again.

"Not that it was serious. But it might have been. I caught it in time, and I can bawl my own wife out with good effect. I took her to Bermuda on a trip. The whole thing didn't amount to a damn, though it gave me a scare. Mrs. Beaston is a pretty woman too — and she quite humanly enough, I suppose, delighted in parties and flattery and meeting people whose lives were all play and no work."

I watched Beaston's face. I had never met Mrs. Beaston.

I had never even seen her. But I knew she was a Boston woman, of good family; fairly attractive, and utterly attentive to her surgeon husband. I knew most of all that he adored her. They were one of the devoted couples that were pointed out and remarked upon in the profession.

"Only one bad habit remained with my wife!" Dr. Beaston put his hands behind his head and stretched himself luxuriously. "She still runs charge accounts that were unheard of in our menage a few years ago. But then, why shouldn't she? I can afford not to mind these days. And for many long years Mrs. Beaston went without pretty things, for my sake. So that I might get ahead. Now I can afford things. I'm letting her take a trip to Europe. She is sailing to-morrow." He massaged his head roughly with the palms of his hands, and then sat forward with easy languor.

"So watch your step with Letitia Richey," he smiled. "But if there is anything you think I could do — on the side — to help you with the children, just let me know."

"You can tell me right now," I said promptly, "whether I'd be doing wrong to feed them more than creamy milk and occasionally broth. That's all the orders call for. But — you know what I mean?"

Beaston shrugged.

"I'm not on the case," he reminded me.

"I know that. But what would you do if you *were* on the case?"

"My dear Lora. What an absurd question. The children are suffering from *anemia*."

"And food that would strengthen them — and build them up — wouldn't do any harm at all?"

"Go to the head of the class!"

I tried to have a talk with Dr. Ranger too. But that gentleman was superbly busy. He came only in the day time to see the children, so I was never present. Never did he find a moment to see me at the office — and so I gave up.

Meanwhile Mrs. Ranger had written me a nice note giving me an introduction to her wholesale house. I went down the following day and bought me a slinky caracul coat like I had longed for. Cocoa brown, with a Johnny collar, for I couldn't afford one with a fox collar. As it was, I had to add fifty dollars of my own to the hundred of Mrs. Richey's. But it was worth it — to own a caracul....

Lester liked me in it too. He teased me unmercifully. Said the thing had inhabitants, he was sure, and offered to buy me some lice powder. But I knew he liked it, and was proud of me in it. He bought me a nice little five-dollar brown hat to go with it, one night when we were out together. I wore it practically all winter. I knew what it meant — for Rachmaninoff was playing that week, and Lester didn't go.

He did go with me to a matinee, however. Mrs. Richey (whom I did not see for more than a week) had left several notes and packages in the children's room for me. Two bottles of the *Toujour Moi* perfume (which Mrs. Maxwell did *not* have a chance to confiscate), an atomizer

all tricky and pink, and a pair of tickets to a Wednesday afternoon performance of a musical comedy.

So Lester got an afternoon off (swearing that he didn't ask for it, because they never knew whether he was there or not, and when he was there they thought him an errand boy), and we went to the show, sitting right in the front row with the drummer under our chins.

Lester didn't like musical comedy. And his remarks ruined the whole afternoon for me. He slumped in his chair with a high-and-mighty show-me expression on his face, and glowered at every one on the stage, making sarcastic remarks about everything from the scenery down to the orchestra leader. The music, particularly, pained him, and the leading comedian almost made him break out into a rash. Lester devised a scheme of laughing loudly two minutes after the rest of the audience had laughed.... It was very embarrassing.

So next time Mrs. Richey gave me tickets, I took Mortimer. That was lots more fun. Mortimer, it seemed, supplied half the cast with their liquor, and knew who wrote the songs, and who had been fired in rehearsal, and how this one had come up from burlesque and the other one had come down from opera....

Mortie was in high spirits right about then, anyway, and very apt to order a golden halo made to order at Tiffany's for me. The two-act drama that we had devised for his sister was working like a charm. The "real father" had behaved like a gentleman tracked and brought to justice, and had seen Dr. Ranger. Mona's husband had returned,

overjoyed at the news, tickled silly, and had immediately struck for and *got*—a raise! Mona was happy once more, for all that her eyes were a bit moody and clouded. She had refused to see the real parent of her child, and insisted she never wanted to hear of him again. Which probably suited that married gentleman to a T. She had told Mortie that I had brought a great change in her life. (So had the married gentleman, though I didn't express the thought!) She had gone driving with Mortie and expounded the theory that punishment isn't always the best way of teaching a lesson. Sometimes forgiveness and the diverting of a tragedy will make a far more profound impression....

Mona, it seems, was going to be angelic for the rest of her life.

And Mortie looked at me as a devout religious might gaze upon the picture of a saint.

Still and all, I'd rather be with Lester, any day than with Mortie. Mortie was fun. But that's as far as it went.

Mortie loved me in my new coat too. He made me a present of beige gloves and a handsome suede purse to go with it! And one day he borrowed it "to have it copied for his sister," and brought it back with a big fluffy collar of brown fox on it! Poor chap—he was so tickled with my delight over it, he proposed to me before the afternoon was over! And I laughed myself sick. Asking him if he thought the fox fur gave him a claim on me, and if so I'd rip it off. And reminding him that I loved Lester—and would always love Lester——

Mortie wasn't a bit offended. He got to calling for me

outside the Richey apartment house every morning at seven and taking me to breakfast before I went home. He insisted it was a system. He wanted to show me how pleasant it would be to have breakfast with him every morning — pointing out that he was never grumpy, and always shaved, and didn't read the newspaper at the table.... He was a sweet old thing. Always he asked after the Richey kids, and regularly he supplied me with pansies and sweet peas to bring them "from my window box." It was easy to talk to Mortie. Lester never thought to ask after the kids. They were in a world apart from his own. Not that I cared.

Finch, my roommate, didn't care about the Richey kids either. She listened to Maloney and me nag each other, and took no sides. As far as the Richey case was concerned, it merely meant a steady job and regular money for me. That was Finch's slant. But after all, Finch was absorbed in only one thought — and that was her kid sister Vivian.

The occasional parties in the evenings were still going on, whenever Vivian was around. Sometimes she would be at our apartment in the afternoon for an hour or so. Once when she visited, she tried on my caracul coat and went into headlong rhapsodies over it. She had never worn a garment quite so lovely.

So she asked me if she might wear it one night — out with Stanley Forbes when she had a date with him. I didn't mind. I let her wear it several times after that, and merely wore my old coat over to the Richey's instead. (I never

did lend her the hat that Lester had bought for me, though!)

I think Vivian could thank that coat for the thrilling romance that followed. I'll never forget Finch when Vivian came and announced she was engaged to Stanley Forbes! Finch, whose one waking thought was money, disapproved violently. But Vivian laughed and defied her to find any real objection to her Stanley....

So Finch accepted the engagement finally — with an air of great sacrifice and resignation. At least Vivian was to continue with her training, and the engagement would be a secret. Finch derived some peculiar sort of satisfaction from that.

Meanwhile in the Richey home I sensed a strained, hushed air about the apartment. Perhaps it was my imagination. Perhaps it was because I saw nobody except Mrs. Maxwell. I didn't see Mrs. Richey. I merely found small packages of gifts, or notes from her on the sitting room table. I seldom heard her voice around the place. I didn't see Dr. Ranger, because he came only in the day time. Nor did I see Nick, the chauffeur. Nor the one person I wanted most to see — Uncle Phil.

The visits from Mrs. Maxwell added to my sense of the unusual and the mysterious. The first night she had been fairly talkative — but I began to feel it must have been a most unusual outburst for her. She would enter the children's apartment nightly, ask how they were, go through the refrigerator, bring in fresh linen or extra food, and

almost never say a word! Even if I asked a friendly question, or offered some casual remark, she never answered me, no more than if she hadn't heard. The children had a way of freezing up when she entered too. Watching her with dulled eyes, and never speaking unless she spoke to them.

She really gave me the creeps, in her stiff dresses, and her high collars, and her thin bluish hands — and her face. Above all her face — with its withered cheeks all rouged and powdered and its thin lips pasty with lipstick, and mascara and pencil on her eyes ... and her frizzled greyish hair that had obviously been given a cheap permanent wave. ...

Maloney on the other hand, whom I saw each evening and each morning as I arrived or left my job, had plenty to say about Mrs. Maxwell. She heartily detested the woman, and certainly, from all I could gather, she had full reason. I could believe Maloney, for I knew how Mrs. Maxwell had snatched the perfume bottle out of my hand that first evening I met her.

But I tried to laugh it off. I belittled Maloney for taking the old woman seriously, and begged her not to quarrel with her.

Maloney, however, was Irish.

And before the week was up she had it out with Mrs. Maxwell, hot and heavy, over some china that was broken — and each blamed the other. Plus the fact that the housekeeper complained Maloney ordered too much from the

drug store and the bills were exorbitant. Intimating that perhaps Maloney was supplying herself on the side.

That finished Maloney. She resigned.

She told me about it that night when I arrived.

"Oh, Maloney, you give me a pain!" I wailed. "How do I know *who* will be the day nurse now?"

"You give *me* a pain!" snapped Maloney. "Sticking on this case like it was your own flesh and blood. I'm just as sorry for the kids as you are, but I'll be damned if I'll take anybody's mouth. Life is too short. I can get loads of jobs. I can't do anything for the kids, when you come right down to it. And neither can you. I tell you, Hart, there's going to be a blow-up here one of these days, and if you were wise you'd keep your skirts clean of it. Not that you'll pay any attention to my opinion. But I'm older at this game than you are, and I'll tell you it isn't worth it. Not the last lousy one of them is worth it. Take it from somebody who knows!"

I had thrown myself dejectedly in the Morris chair of the sitting room, staring at Maloney. Her fury was too fresh to combat. And besides — with every word she spoke I had a feeling she was right. Too right!

My silence stole her thunder somewhat. With burning cheeks and sullen mouth, she packed her bag with her soiled uniform and cap, picking things up with angry jerky movements, and half mumbling additional venom under her breath.

It took her about fifteen minutes before she was finally ready for the street, down to her nickel fare in her gloved

hand. Still I had sat, dejected. I hadn't even taken off my coat and hat.

"Well, good night, Hart," she said firmly. "You're an all-fired fool for staying here. That's all I've got to say."

"Aren't you even coming in the morning?"

"Oh yes!" Maloney flung back her head proudly. "Who do you think I am? I *never* leave a case unless they have some one to take my place. I'll stay till they find some one. Well, good night."

"Good night, Maloney."

I watched her walk out. A gaunt, lonely woman was Maloney. Not good enough for what she would like to have, and far too good for what she got....

That night, when Mrs. Maxwell came in, I expected her to say something about the day nurse. But not a word. She greeted the kids and myself, and went into the kitchen. As usual, a silence fell between us three whenever the housekeeper entered.

When she emerged into the bedroom again, I cleared my throat.

"I understand the day nurse is leaving."

"She's being changed," Mrs. Maxwell corrected me. Her shoulders stiffened, and her faded eyes behind the heavy mascara shifted, irritably. "I left some Ovaltine in the ice-box and some country eggs."

"Thank you."

"Good night."

"Good night."

"I said good *night!*" Mrs. Maxwell turned sharply to the two litle beds.

"Good night, Mrs. Maxwell," mumbled Desney.

"Night," breathed Nanny.

The housekeeper's mouth twitched, and without another glance at any of us, she left the room.

For several seconds there was continued silence.

"Well," I turned and smiled. "We have Ovaltine."

Nanny smiled back at me. But Desney's eyes were fixed on the door.

"I — hate — her," she said slowly.

"Desney!"

"Well, I do. Mummy hates her too. So does Nanny, don't you? Mummy just can't bear her. And Aunt Nell knows that Mummy hates her."

"Aunt Nell? Who are you talking about, Desney?"

"Her!" Desney jerked a venomous thumb at the door where Mrs. Maxwell had disappeared.

"You mean Mrs. Maxwell? Since when have you called her Aunt Nell?"

"We always did. Didn't we, Nanny? Until after Daddy died. And then pretty soon Mummy called her Mrs. Maxwell, and told us to call her Mrs. Maxwell, too."

"Oh."

"Mummy always made fun of her to Daddy. She always said she bet the old woman would live on forever. And she was right!" Desney sighed with a rather perfect imitation of her mother's pretty exasperation.

I laughed.

"Is she really your aunt?"

"Mummy says no," Desney explained in a confidential and gossipy whisper. "She was my Daddy's step-sister. So she wasn't exactly *our* aunt. But Daddy always took care of her and was good to her, and Daddy liked us to call her Aunt to make her feel more at home."

"Oh, I see," I nodded, and sat back eagerly relishing that scrap of home news.

No wonder Mrs. Maxwell was so high and mighty — so authoritative and smug! No wonder she painted and frizzed and gave herself high airs. One of the family, eh? One of the family that Letitia Richey didn't dare kick out, for all that she was "sick of old people around."

"Tell us a story, Miss Hart," Nanny's thin voice broke in on my thoughts.

"Oh, please do," added Desney. "Tell us about Mr. Mumps and Mrs. Measles."

# *Chapter Eight*

Two mornings later a Mrs. Grimm arrived in Maloney's stead. I had never heard of Mrs. Grimm. She came from a registry, and she did not know Dr. Ranger. She was old, tired and disgruntled, and I didn't give her very many days.... But I showed her about and explained the case.

Directly after my last talk with Dr. Beaston I had hinted to Mrs. Maxwell about the children's food. She had frozen up like a totem pole, reminding me sharply that the doctor's orders were supplied, and that the children were to get "no more and no less."

After that I decided not to mention the matter again. I got to waking the kids every few hours, to give them half-cream-and-half-milk, or their broth. I woke them the same time that I was supposed to eat my night meal. My dinner was left in the oven for me, and I had it all heated and appetizing. It was good fresh food. And I would feed Nanny and Desney, mouthful by mouthful, a little more every night — of the mashed potatoes, the fresh peas, the

tomatoes and little pieces of the meats — white of chicken or steak cut very very small, or lamb chop....

They loved it. Desney particularly. Nanny ate very little and was not easy to tempt. But Desney looked forward to the midnight feasts with exciting relish. I got so that I'd bring in a bunch of sandwiches for myself in my kitbag — and I'd have the whole dinner of the fresh homecooked food to give the kids. Sometimes I'd cook beef tea at home, or squeeze the juice of pressed beef, and bring it in a thermos bottle hidden in my night bag. Then I'd heat that up and throw it over a little toast.

They had a habit of waking up around four o'clock in the morning too. And I made it part of my routine to rub their little bodies with olive oil, massaging them gently.... Such bony frail little bodies....

But I couldn't do very much, and it aggravated me. It wasn't good to feed them at night — but it was better than not feeding them at all. The day nurse was what counted — but I didn't dare think of making such a move. Ranger might be annoyed.

Mrs. Grimm lasted three days, and was changed because the children couldn't bear her. A nice little girl named Chumley came after that. Very fresh and new. I had a feeling that it was her first case, though she denied it beautifully. Her chief concern was the gorgeous surroundings and the apparent lavish display of wealth and luxury in the place....A nice kid, with about as much personality as a pallbearer. And oh, how she *admired* Dr.

Ranger. She admired him every few minutes, with gurgling breathless praise....

Not a word did I hear about the European trip. Mrs. Richey must have changed her plans, for she was still in and out of the house. Nightly we heard the radio music from the far front room, or bursts of male laughter topping Letitia's, or the clinking of ice....And in all that time the children hadn't seen their mother — nor had Mrs. Maxwell mentioned taking them in to say good night to their pretty blonde parent.

Three days before Thanksgiving, however, an incident occurred that I had cause later to well remember.

Coming in one evening, Nanny and Desney told me in great excitement that their older sister, Juanita, was home for the holidays. She had arrived that morning. But they had not seen her. She had sent them a note by Mrs. Maxwell saying "Hello."...The kids were all het up about it; they wanted dreadfully to see Juanita and talk to her. Evidently she was going to be allowed in — just for a few moments the following noon.

The next night I heard of that visit. Almost fevered with excitement and joy, the kids told me. Juanita seemed so tall, and prettier than ever. She had not been allowed to kiss them. She stood only at their door to talk with them, and Uncle Phil stood beside her all the while she visited!

For four days, Juanita visited the kids like that. Meanwhile, the kids and I had our Thanksgiving dinner at eleven P.M. with ten cent store toy turkeys around their beds, sent them by Mortie. They knew all about Mortie

now, and often sent him their love. They knew about Lester, and they asked after Maloney nearly every night....

I gave them toast with turkey gravy over it, and little pieces of the white meat, and mashed turnips and cranberry sauce and even a little tiny piece of the cake that was left for dessert.... And it didn't make them sick, either.

But the next evening I heard that Juanita *hadn't been in to see them!* She was still in the house. But she didn't come to their door to say "hello."

Juanita was in that apartment for three days before Thanksgiving and four days thereafter. Never once did I catch a glimpse of her. Never once did I hear her voice. All I knew was that she stopped in the threshold again the last day to throw a good-by kiss to her little sisters. She was headed back for boarding school.

A few days later Chumley was fired because she went out shopping one afternoon when the kids were asleep. And the kids woke, and Mrs. Maxwell had been called upon to rush in and take care of them. Mrs. Maxwell got sore — and Chumley was changed.

In her place came a woman named Hapstan who was having great trouble with her teeth, and who was far more concerned over the "new plate" than over the kids and their whining.

I was aggravated. I wore my brain lame trying to think of some way...

And then suddenly, I saw a chance!

Mrs. Richey called me into her room one evening as soon as I arrived.

I found her not half so pretty as on my last visit.

She was reclining on the chaise longue of her bedroom, in a ravishing pair of purple, white, and red satin pajamas. Her maid was rubbing her feet with something.... And over Mrs. Richey's head, as she rested back on the pillows, was an ice pack. Her face was swabbed with cold cream, which she began to wipe off tenderly with a warm damp towel as she talked with me. Her lips were colorless and rather loose. Her voice husky....Beside her on a table were a whiskey bottle, a siphon and a small glass....I saw at once that either she was drinking, or just getting over a souse....

"Hello," she said lifelessly, as I drew close to her. "Come over close. I can't see you. Sit down there."

I drew up a needlepoint stool and sat where she directed.

"Hello, Mrs. Richey. Feeling bad? Anything I can do?"

"No. Just getting an overhauling."

She wriggled herself upright a crumb, and began patting and smoothing her face with the steaming wet towel. The maid worked on, gently pulling and rubbing each of Letitia's thin white toes without so much as glancing at me.

"Oh God!" moaned Mrs. Richey suddenly. "You look so all-fired fresh!"

She was staring at me with childish disapproval.

"Well," I grinned. "That's part of my job."

"Why do you wear those stiff things?" she demanded.

"It's my uniform!"

"But, good grief — do you have to wear them all starched and stiff? Don't they stifle you? Can't you wear silk?"

"I could — if they were as cheap as these."

She sat up again, pulling her feet away from the maid by doing so, without seeming to realize it.

"You mean — you just can't afford them?"

I laughed and nodded. Her concern, and her horror were too comical.

"Tell me," her voice cracked in her eagerness. "Do you wear stiff things underneath? I mean against your *flesh?*"

I laughed openly that time.

"No. I wear silk things that I can wash out." I lifted my uniform skirt and showed her the corner of my pink bloomers to prove my words. "Really, Mrs. Richey, the uniforms aren't bad. They're a lot of trouble. And they get scratchy after they're washed sometimes. But you get used to them."

Towel in hand, she gazed at me, long and thoughtfully, with eyes that seemed blurred and sleepy. Then suddenly she leaned forward and poured a glassful of whiskey very deliberately.

I glanced at the maid. Whenever Mrs. Richey moved, the girl straightened and waited silently until her mistress was quiet once more. Now she stood expressionless, gazing out the curtained windows at the lights of New Jersey beyond....

Mrs. Richey drank her small glass of whiskey straight, in two swallows. Then she leaned forward and reached for the siphon. Her hand was none too steady. I bent over

and helped her, filling the little glass with the charged water. She drank this quietly.

"To-morrow," she said, turning to me earnestly, "I'm going to buy you a whole bolt of white silk. That ought to make you five or six uniforms. And you're to go to *my* dressmaker. She'll charge *me*."

"But, Mrs. Richey..."

"To-morrow!" She raised her hand with an air of finality.

I sat back. What was the use of speaking my piece? By to-morrow she'd forget the whole thing....

"Don't ever let me see you again — in things like that. They're inhuman. Now, are you happy?"

"Very happy." Anything to humor her. "Did you want to see me about something, Mrs. Richey?"

"Yes. Yes, of course. Certainly I wanted to see you. What did I want to see you about? I had it on the tip of my tongue a minute ago...."

"About the trip, ma'am?" The maid prompted Mrs. Richey in a quiet muffled tone. It startled me. I had almost felt she couldn't talk.

"Certainly!" Mrs. Richey laughed delightedly, and her finger sailed up in the air and pointed at me. "That was it. I'm going on a trip."

"Oh. When, Mrs. Richey?"

"To-morrow."

"To Europe?"

"No. No, it's too cold. No, I'm not going to Europe."

She sat up straight, and again reached for the whiskey bottle, again pouring the tiny glass full. Only this time

she spilled some on her satin pajamas, and cursed. The maid reached up and wiped away the trickle....

Unsteadily, Mrs. Richey carried the glass to her lips. And drank with her tired eyes closed. This time she forgot the siphon ceremony. She leaned back on the cushions, and pressed her palms against her forehead. A firm glow of color was coming into her cheeks....

"No," she repeated after a few minutes, "I'm going to Palm Beach for my health."

"You are ill, Mrs. Richey?"

"I'm all — run down."

"You shouldn't be drinking like that..."

Like a shot she sat straight up, her eyes flaming at me.

"I've been *told* to take it. As medicine!" she flared.

The maid was looking at me now, fright and admiration in her eyes.

I'll admit Mrs. Richey's sudden energy, and the fierceness of her expression frightened me a bit. She looked like a woman capable of doing anything. Like the sort of women in olden days who flogged their own slaves....

Besides, I didn't want to make an enemy of her.

"Oh, sure. As medicine. I understand that," I agreed glibly. "But not that awful stuff." I picked up the whiskey bottle with a derisive gesture. "That isn't fit for your delicatessen dealer. Why, my best friend is a bootlegger, Mrs. Richey. And I know something of liquor from him, all right."

She breathed explosively in relief. Her face softened, and her eyes blinked with interest.

"A friend of yours?"

"Oh, he's no ordinary bootlegger," I boasted confidentially. "He supplies only the swells. You should see his list, Mrs. Richey. Honest, it's a joke. Politicians, society people, the biggest people in town. You'd be surprised at some of those names. And you'd be surprised at who backs him!"

"Really? Can't I meet him?"

"Oh, but you're going away!" I frowned violently. I didn't want her to meet Mortie. Mortie was a nice chap. If she went after her chauffeur the way she did, Mortie might never be the same sweet boy again.

"Couldn't you get me some stuff?"

"I might arrange it. When you get back. He doesn't go in for this so-called bonded stuff. His is direct from Germany and Italy and France. His isn't one of these huge truckload businesses. It's only select stuff for people who know. Now honest, Mrs. Richey, you've offered me silk uniforms. One good turn deserves another. I know liquor. And I know you shouldn't be drinking this rot-gut whiskey. It's damn near poisonous."

She stared at the uplifted bottle with a grimace.

"Maybe that's what makes me so sick," she said feebly.

"Naturally! Feed it to your cat!"

"Liquor never used to affect me," she moaned dolefully, "until just lately."

"I bet it has your stomach all out of kilter. I bet you can't eat."

"That's true."

"For heaven's sake, don't let them sell you such stuff."

I got up, conscious of her infantile interest, and walked into her bathroom with it. I calmly poured the whiskey down the sink.

Mrs. Richey laughed and clapped her hands. Got up to her bare feet. Swayed, and sat down again.

"There! That's how much I think of you! And that's what I think of that!" I said as I came back to her.

"Can you get me some of the good stuff?"

"Why, of course. It takes time. Whenever the ships come in. And he has a long list."

"Could you ship some down to Palm Beach for me?"

"Well, I hardly think so."

"Oh dear! Well, listen. I'll tell you what. Mr. Phillip Richey and I — and my maid — are going on the boat tomorrow. But my chauffeur is driving the car down for us. He will meet us there. Do you suppose he could bring some down?"

"Why — maybe I could arrange it."

"Oh, do try. I'll leave a blank check for you to fill out the amount. . . ."

"Oh, he does business on a cash basis."

"How much would it be? I tell you what. I'll give the money to my chauffeur. Up to three hundred dollars."

"Oh, that's too much."

"No, I want as much as I can get. As much as Nick can tote along. Do that for me, will you? You see, Mr. Phillip Richey is going to open up his house down there."

"You'll be away a long time then?"

"That will be our headquarters all winter. Stella will give

you the address, and the phone number. Stella, write out the address and the phone number. And, Stella, make a note to order that silk and notify my dressmaker."

The maid turned silently to the desk, and a few moments later handed me a slip of paper with the Florida address.

"We'll make several side trips, I guess. But we'll be there most of the time." Mrs. Richey settled back again on the chaise longue. "Maybe later my chauffeur could make a couple of trips up, and get a fresh supply from your friend."

"Maybe."

"Well, anyway, I'm leaving to-morrow, Thank God." Mrs. Richey sighed wearily. "And I just wanted to see you. I wanted to be sure you'd stay on with my babies. They like you so much, and it's nice to know that somebody will be here that they like."

"Of course I'll stay, Mrs. Richey. I wouldn't leave those kids ever — unless you made me."

"Good!" She sniffed pettishly. Tears filled her vapid blue eyes. She was starting on a weepy spell. "I'm so glad. You can phone me if you need anything, or if anything goes wrong in the house. Of course, Dr. Ranger will know where I am and will be in constant touch with me. Giving reports. He says they'll be perfectly all right."

"Oh, sure," I agreed grimly. "They'll be all right."

"And I *need* to go for my health." She was really crying now, with little soft catches of breath. "It's best for me to be away from them anyway. They upset me, and I upset them. Oh, do be good to my babies, won't you?"

"Like I was their own mother myself."

She reached out her hand. I took hold of it. It was a cold hand.

"Thank you," she caught her breath and wiped away her tears with the corner of her pajama coat, while Stella turned swiftly to get her a handkerchief. "And don't you mind anything that old buzzard does. That Mrs. Maxwell. All she does is run the place. Don't let her get your goat."

"No, I won't, Mrs. Richey. Now, you ought to take a nap. Some bicarb and a nap. You're all upset."

"Why shouldn't I be upset?" she flared, standing up suddenly. "Drinking *poison* into my system! No, I haven't time for a nap. Stella, get my bath ready. I must dress. There are six to dinner here to-night. Farewell party. And we're showing motion pictures in the drawing room afterward — *private* ones — and they're very naughty!"

She laughed at the mere mention of the promised entertainment.

"Good-by, Miss Hart," she said, as suddenly again. "Tell your friend to meet my chauffeur in the Dome Garage to-morrow at noon. Will you?"

"Sure. I'll take care of it. Good-by, Mrs. Richey. Try to get well. And only drink the *good* booze. Nothing but the *real stuff*. Good-by."

All that evening I thought over my conversation with the poor woman, and by morning I had made up my mind to several things. If the whole family were going away, now was my chance perhaps.

To begin with, I saw a rather neat way of treating my friend the chauffeur with a little of his own medicine.

When Mortie called for me the next morning, and took me to breakfast, I talked a plan over with him. I told him more than I had any right to tell an outsider. But I trusted Mortie like he was my brother.

He snorted when he heard of how Nick had struck me, that first night on the Richey case. And when I told him how the chauffeur had scared the children — Mortie's fingers itched in a nice full-knuckled fist.

We hatched our plan in about an hour. And at noon, Mortie sent one of his men over to the Dome Garage to meet Nick. He sold him the whole three hundred dollars' worth, and dated Nick to pick up the stuff at ten o'clock that night, on a side street in Staten Island.

The following morning at breakfast, Mortie reported to me that all had gone smoothly. Nick had met Mortie's man, and picked up a nice load at the right time and place. As far as we knew, Nick was on his way down to Florida.

Mortie and I had strawberries and cream for breakfast to celebrate. We never said a further word on the subject, but every so often our eyes would meet, and Mortie would grin — and I could feel my own eyes flash.

Of course it was none of our business, and none of our concern, that Nick might be arrested between here and Florida? That his car might be searched, and that he might be hauled in for transporting liquor! That was a risk every one takes who wants to indulge in such daring adventures. None of our business at all — providing we

weren't the ones who tipped off the Federal Officers in Maryland that such a car would come through....

No, no business of ours! But a lot of satisfaction if it happened. Once, not so long ago, I swore I'd put that man behind bars....

Meanwhile Mrs. Richey and her elaborate entourage had taken leave of the household, and set sail for the South. The kids told me how their mother had come in and kissed them good-by....Of how pretty she looked with a little veil over her blue hat....

I noticed a slight lessening of the tension in Mrs. Maxwell's manner that night when she came in. And something very much like the markings of a storm of tears....

I felt sorry for her.

"Well, I understand we're all alone in this big place now," I smiled at her in my most friendly manner.

"Yes," she said, and her voice was frayed. "I've been more alone than this. All alone here—for months at a time. Nobody—not a soul but me."

"Listen, Mrs. Maxwell," I frowned. "You're all done up. Why don't you go to bed? Don't bother about us. I can take care of things. Why don't you get a good hot bath and a good rest?"

She looked at me, half suspicious.

"I am—tired," she admitted thinly.

"You're a wreck," I insisted purposefully. "Where is your room? Why don't you get all fixed in bed and let me bring you a cup of nice hot tea?"

"No, thank you," she shook her head. "I don't need

anything. I am tired though. If you don't need me, I think I'll go straight to bed."

"Certainly. And if I can do anything—let me know. Don't you get up early either. I'll take care of the day nurse when she comes. And I'll let in the cook when she arrives. I'll tell her to bring your breakfast in to your bed."

"I don't think I'll need that. I'll be up and about early. I always get up early."

She looked around the children's sitting room slowly. Her eyes rested on a large package on top of the tiny piano.

"What's that?" she demanded.

"Oh. Why that's some silk Mrs. Richey had sent up to me from the store. Her dressmaker is going to make me some new uniforms."

Mrs. Maxwell stood watching the package as if she hoped her glance might bore a hole through it.

"Would you like to see it? I haven't seen it myself," I said, and went over to lift the package down.

She didn't answer, but I knew she was eager. I found a scissors and cut the cord, tearing off the paper.

"Oh, what silk," I gasped.

Mrs. Maxwell's bluish hand jerked out and felt of the material between the thumb and forefinger.

"Must have cost five dollars a yard," she murmured.

I looked at her. Her eyes were greedy.

"Say," I said. "I can't use all of that. Why don't you have

a dress made of it too? It's really too gorgeous for uniforms."

She glanced up at me. Some of the mascara from her eyes had smeared.

"I'd need at least four and a half yards for a dress," she said sharply.

"Well, good heavens, that's nothing," I waved my hand in the air. "I'll still have three or four uniforms out of it. Go ahead. I can't use it all."

"Well, if you really think—"

"I know it. Go ahead. It will make a lovely dress."

Swiftly, Mrs. Maxwell marched into the tiny room that had belonged to a governess, and returned a moment later with a tape measure. Without a word, she began unrolling the bolt of white silk—measuring off by the yard...four and a half....

"Just in case for the sleeves?" she looked up at me as she measured another half yard—making five.

"You'd better," I nodded. "Ummm. Make it five yards. You don't want to run short."

She held the point of the fifth yard between her fingers, and reached with a free hand for the scissors. She cut swiftly, breathing fast.

"That's lovely," she whispered, as she held up her piece, and began to fold it with caressing fingers. "Nice of you."

"Not at all."

"Good night, then. I'll get some rest, like you say."

"Good night, Mrs. Maxwell. Don't you worry."

Mrs. Richey left for Palm Beach on the 30th of November.

On December 2nd, two things happened.

First, Miss Hapstan left the case because her teeth were bothering her so. Mrs. Maxwell, grumbling like a thunderstorm, set about getting another girl. She was there in Miss Hapstan's place when I arrived that night. A ruddy-cheeked woman named Dunn, who seemed nice enough for any one to get on with.

And secondly, Mrs. Maxwell told me the news! Mrs. Richey's chauffeur had been arrested in Maryland!...

Mrs. Maxwell was highly upset over the whole thing. Mrs. Richey had phoned and asked to speak to *me!* She was to phone again to-night to talk to me. What did I have to do with it, demanded Mrs. Maxwell?

"Why a friend of mine sold Mrs. Richey's chauffeur some liquor," I told her confidentially. "You don't suppose I'll get into any trouble, Mrs. Maxwell? Wouldn't that be dreadful? A nurse—like me?"

"You won't get into any trouble," she nodded vigorously. "Believe me, that chauffeur deserves to be arrested. Good riddance to him!"

"Yeh?"

"The way he and Tishy carries on! Enough to make you sick. Oh, I've seen what goes on around here. Most of it. I'm not blind yet."

"Umm. Really? She seems like such a nice woman."

"She was *never* a nice woman. Never what you might call a *nice* woman. No sir, not Letitia Richey. And what a life she led her husband! Poor man. May he rest in his

grave. He never rested on this earth. And her enjoying his millions now — off sunning herself in Palm Beach."

"Too bad *you* couldn't have gone, Mrs. Maxwell." I shook my head. "You're the one that needs it. You're all run down."

"Don't I know it!" she agreed lugubriously.

"You're just a bunch of nerves. Just headed for a nervous breakdown," I mourned. "Honestly, it's criminal."

"I've been through so much in this house," she murmured, her over-red lips trembling with self-pity.

"I can well imagine! The way they *treat* you. You running the whole place. And no small job — a big place like this, and sickness in the family, and all the ordering to do. No wonder you're run down!"

Her eyes swam around in tears like two little water spiders.

"Maybe I'd better see a doctor to-morrow," she decided.

"Nonsense," I said sharply. "Why go to a doctor? You're not sick. The doctor will just tell you commonsense. And charge you good money for it."

"Oh, I know what they can charge," she wailed afresh. "I've been through two sieges in my day — and it cost a small fortune."

"Sure. You don't need any doctor."

"What do you think I should do?"

"Well — I suppose I have no right to say."

"Oh, I wish you would. You're a nurse. You must know. I know I'm in a terrible condition. And I don't want to

get sick. Who would care if I got sick and died? They'd probably like it better."

"Nonsense. That's the talk of a sick person. Well, if I were you —"

"Yes?"

"I'd go to a turkish bath about once every ten days. I'd get sun baths too. And I'd rest myself no matter what. And massages. I could massage you. I'd be glad to. Just sit back and let others wait on you, and take life easy for a change."

"Would you really massage me?"

"Well, of course I would. Gladly. Either in here or your room."

The telephone interrupted us at that moment.

Mrs. Maxwell answered first, while I stood beside her in the huge library of the apartment. A room I hadn't seen before.

"Yes, she's right here," she called, and turned to hand the receiver to me.

It was not Mrs. Richey's voice I heard. A man's voice who told me he was Mr. Phillip Richey.

"My sister-in-law tells me, Miss Hart," he said, in very slow and cultured tones, "that your friend knows a lot of politicians. Don't you think he might use his influence on this case?"

"Oh, I don't think so," I refused politely. "He only knows New York politicians. How would that help your chauffeur any — in Maryland?"

"But after all — he might be implicated himself!"

"Oh, *Mr. Richey!*"

"You must understand, Miss Hart—"

His voice broke off, and I thought he had hung up or been disconnected. But in a second, I heard another voice. The curiously childlike voice of Letitia Richey.

"Hello, Miss Hart," she said. "Your friend *won't* be implicated. Don't you worry."

"Oh, I don't really worry, Mrs. Richey. Because they'd have a hard time tracking down my friend. He has pretty high protection. They wouldn't bother him on a thing like this, I'm sure. He's been in much tighter jams."

(I remember the time Mortie was shot in the left thigh as I spoke, and couldn't help laughing.)

"Well, don't you worry anyway. And don't you think about it," Mrs. Richey answered coolly. "Let the fool take the consequences. Nobody can help him. He's arrested on five charges."

"Good gracious—"

"Yes, he is. Wouldn't that gripe you? He was carrying a gun—he had liquor in the car—he was lit himself—he was speeding, and he is guilty of the Mann Act."

"And what may that be, Mrs. Richey?"

"Traveling with a woman—transporting her over state boundary lines. A cheap little cabaret dancer. So he can take the consequences, as far as *I'm* concerned."

"Well, I should think so, Mrs. Richey. And after all, my friend isn't responsible for all that, is he?"

"Hardly. I'm not even going to put up bail for him. But my brother-in-law is very upset about it all, of course.

You see, they confiscated our car. That means Mr. Richey has to go up to Maryland to do something about it. Probably fork over a big fine or something. That's one reason why we called you. He thought you might help. Or get your friend to help."

"Well, I'll speak to him. I don't know how he could help, though."

"The reason *I* called," Mrs. Richey continued in a very friendly voice, "is that I *want* the stuff. More of it. Can't I get it down here some way?"

"Maybe. I'll ask my boy friend!"

"Please do."

"Sure. He'll probably find a way. And don't you drink anything until you get the right stuff, will you?"

"I can't promise," Mrs. Richey laughed. "But I'll try. It's awfully hard not to get wet near an ocean. Good night, Miss Hart. Oh, by the way, how are the babies?"

"Just about the same. Don't worry. Good night, Mrs. Richey."

I repeated practically the whole conversation to Mrs. Maxwell who hung by, avid for gossip. Her glee at Nick's troubles was almost satanic.

"I told Tishy he was no good," she crowed. "Many's the time I told her. And a lot of thanks I got for it!"

"Come along," I said, "and I'll massage you before the kids wake up."

By the end of the week, I had the friendship of Mrs.

Maxwell if that was what I wanted. And it was! Plus the opportunity of running things my own way—

She was so sick by the end of that week that it was a toss-up between her and the kids. You can make everybody think they're an invalid if you tell them often enough that they look bad and ought to take care of themselves.

If I told Mrs. Maxwell she was pale, she had a fainting spell. If I told her she had a headache, she damn near had brain-fever.

God knows, the poor old hag needed a rest. And relaxation. And a little fuss and coaxing.

I would make her take naps, and stay in bed late in the morning, and I'd bring her trays of dainties, and prescribed a good diet. I gave her ice bags when she was hot, and hot water bottles when her feet were cold. I massaged her with alcohol, and sent her out in the afternoons to walk around the reservoir in Central Park. Whereupon, she must take a good bath, and rub and nap.

She was a wily old woman, and covetous as the devil himself. It was her idea that she was getting hundreds of dollars' worth of advice from me for nothing—instead of having to pay huge sums to a doctor. That tickled her. She kept remarking what fools people were to pay out good coin to doctors when all they had to do was take care of themselves.

Finally, fate favored me—and I made my stab.

Miss Dunn, the current day nurse, decided to go home to her mother who was ailing.

Poor Mrs. Maxwell wailed and ranted. Such trouble with

nurses! In and out — new ones all the time — and not as much as a thank you for all her kindness to them.

"Listen," I said, the night she broke the news to me about Dunn. "Why do you *have* a day nurse? These children don't really need two nurses. Now, you pay the day nurse and the night nurse fifty-six dollars a week. Why not let me do twenty-four duty and stay here all day and all night? That only costs seventy dollars a week. And you could keep the balance. Well, why not? After all — they won't miss it from your housekeeping accounts, will they?"

Her eyes glistened.

"They never look at them — unless I go over the monthly amount."

"There you are," I said. "I don't think Dr. Ranger would mind."

"Oh, him!" Mrs. Maxwell shrugged as if Ranger were no terror to her. "He don't come here much since the family left anyway. Only been here once since they've gone."

"I can call up Dr. Ranger and fix it with him," I assured her. "Why don't you do it? You and I understand each other. We get along. Why have a lot more strangers around?"

I went on into these arguments purposely. I knew she had made up her mind the moment I mentioned putting forty-two dollars a week into her own pocket.

"I think it's a fine arrangement," she said. "My poor

heart is so weak. I can't stand much more arguing and quarreling with strange women."

"Fine," I said. "When shall I start?"

"Miss Dunn is leaving to-morrow."

"I'll bring over my bags to-morrow evening," I said "Now you get your bath, and call me when you're ready for your rub."

That's how, on December 6th, I went on twenty-four hour-duty at the Richey home. I had called Dr. Ranger and explained that Mrs. Maxwell had asked me to do it. The day nurses were constantly being changed, and were causing a lot of trouble in the house.

He didn't seem to mind. He told me to continue with the same schedule, and said he'd drop around once a week or so.

"There s really nothing can be done for them," he said over the phone, "except to carry on with the usual routine, and see if there's any improvement. They're all right. You understand the case."

"Certainly, Dr. Ranger. Do you want me to send you reports?"

"No, just keep them there for me, and call me if there is any change."

Yes, I understood the case. I understood it well enough by now. I had seen the slight improvement in Desney since I had been feeding her up at nights. I wanted to see the same improvement in Nanny — who really wor-

ried me. The child seemed to waste away by the hour. She was too weak to sit up in bed for any length of time at all. I grew panicky about her — remembering how people could go blind from malnutrition — how many things could happen.

I said good-by to Finch and Vivian, and Maloney and Mortie and Lester.

Lester was furious with me for taking on such a job. Working myself to death for fourteen dollars a week extra. Well, what if I did love the kids? Would I love them when I was flat on my back and worn out?

Mortie, on the other hand, understood. For I had told him more than I could ever have bored or trusted Lester with. Mortie really felt "in on the plot" with me, and was rooting for my success. Besides, the whole affair tickled him. Having helped me land Nick in jail was a continual chuckle to Mortie. It was worth the trouble of sending three hundred dollars worth of stuff down to Mrs. Richey in Palm Beach. How he sent it I don't know. Bootlegging was Mortie's business. I promised to go out with Lester one or two evenings a week, and go driving for some air with Mortie whenever I could get a couple of hours in the afternoon. I explained this to Mrs. Maxwell and she was quite agreeable.

The first thing I did, when I moved into that duck of a little room that had belonged to the governess (who was a German Fraulein named Brucker, I learned from the kids), was to ask the children one favor. That they please call Mrs. Maxwell "Aunt Nell" again. They did.

And the effect after the first few times was miraculous....

I set about from the start, breaking all rules. I had the case just where I wanted it by then.

I'd call up Beaston and ask his advice. He got as excited as I did about the case. After all, he was getting a weekly fee from the Richey family — and there was no reason why he shouldn't give good advice whether they wanted it or not!

Mrs. Maxwell was a lamb in my hands for the most part. She was so sick by that time that she took to going around in an elaborate cast-off negligee of "Tishy's."

And she had got to the stage where she demanded medicine!

So I gave her medicine. Plenty of it. I said I knew what she should take. I got her what is known in the profession as a *placebo* — which, in Latin means, "something to please." It is a sugar pill of absolutely no power or effect which is given to patients who holler for a sleeping pill or more asperin. I got a nice bottle of *Placebos* and marked them "Nerve tonic." She took them once every four hours — and felt improved each time! Later, for her "heart condition" ( though she had none, as her pulse and heart were perfectly normal! ) I gave her an occasional sterile hypo. Another trick of the profession to pacify patients who demand something "to take away the pain." I had seen many a sick person, writhing in agony, grow quiet and sleep after this perfectly innocuous hypo. But I never saw a well person get better after one — like Mrs. Maxwell did.

As a matter of fact, the poor old lady was enjoying her

illness to the full. It was the greatest indoor sport she knew. For once she was getting attention, and petting, and "understanding." And her walks and her naps and her diet *were* improving her — and her disposition!

Meanwhile, I was head over heels with the kids.

Every morning I gave them two teaspoonsful of cod liver oil. And a jolly time I had making them take it. I had to leave off with Nanny at last. It made her nauseous. Every morning and every evening I rubbed their poor scaly little bodies all over with olive oil. Very gently, and a little at a time I would exercise their arms and legs — just to get the circulation up.

Whenever it was a sunny day, I would bundle them up good and warm, and pull each little bed through their sitting room, and through the French windows onto the roof terrace. The sun only got to their little faces; but at least they had fresh air, and a change of scene and a little pleasure.

And I fed them. A very small amount, every few hours. Everything nourishing and sustaining that I could tempt them with. Baked apple with cream, cocoa, and coddled eggs, orange juice and celery and oatmeal and clam broth and every fresh vegetable they would eat....

I gave them toys to play with. A doll apiece, which we let sit on the window sill beside the bowls of narcissus bulbs that we had planted. Picture books and crayons and their teddy bears....

The kids seemed to be improving. Desney particularly made rapid progress. Nanny would improve for a few days,

and then her stomach would go back on her entirely, and for two or three days I would be frantic — phoning Dr. Beaston what he thought best to do.

At least they slept more regularly and peacefully before ten days were up. Their bad dreams were fewer and far between....

It was slow. I expected it to be slow — if at all! But every speck of improvement meant something to me. If only nothing would happen to upset my plans. If only I could really swing things this way until the family were to come back from Palm Beach.... Why, that gave me three months!

Then, suddenly — out of a clear cold December sky — I got a piece of news that sent me weak with fear.

Finch called me up at the Richey apartment to tell me. Dr. Beaston had been found on the street seriously injured the night before — and was in the St. George Hospital!

On his way to a case, he had stopped before a house, got out of his car to come around to the curb, and had been struck by another automobile. A hit-and-run driver, who left Dr. Beaston lying helpless on the street, at two o'clock in the morning. How long he had been lying there, unconscious, nobody could really judge. But he had almost bled to death by the time he was found, with his bag beside him — and taken to the hospital.

He had a compound fracture of the tibia and the femur, said Finch; but he had been too weak to operate on. They

had given him a blood transfusion when he reached the hospital, and had been giving him the necessary treatment for shock all day. They had taken X-rays at four o'clock that afternoon, and had operated an hour later. Beaston was just out of the operating room — and was still unconscious....

I felt weak as a rag when I hung up the receiver and covered my face with my hands. It didn't seem possible — a hit-and-run driver — to leave a man like Beaston lying on the street....

He who had patched and healed so many was lying semi-conscious in the St. George where he had worked so faithfully and so brilliantly for half a lifetime. He who was considered the leading surgeon of the city was in the hands of another man....And his wife was somewhere in Europe with an ocean between her and the man who loved her so....

I explained things to Mrs. Maxwell, who remembered Dr. Beaston from the old days when he used to call on the house — from the day when he made the final attempt to save the kids' father. Even she admitted what a fine man he was, and expressed her understanding and sympathy.

She promised to watch over the children an hour or so.

I went to the St. George and inquired of Miss Dillon, who was tense and pale herself. Her glasses had a way of steaming up on her, so that she had continually to take them off and wipe them as she spoke. They had cabled Mrs. Beaston, she said, and were waiting for a reply....

Every one was inquiring for Dr. Beaston. People who

had worked for him, or people he had worked for, it didn't matter. The place was besieged with inquiries. The world that knew its own paid the homage of its concern.

For two hours I sat there in the hospital waiting to hear the verdict. Sat there, remembering... how he had first offered to lend me money, how he had helped me get into the training school, and how he saved my health and my reason during the dreadful span of illness when I was only nineteen and hadn't a relative or a friend in the world. Of how many others I knew he had befriended — and of his marvelous work in the free ward — of how kind and inspiring and noble he had been, never too busy for a word of appreciation; never too rushed to recognize and greet....

I seemed unable to leave the place — picturing the details of all that had happened to him, as the minutes ticked by over my head....I knew what a difficult and long-delayed operation it must have been. No wonder he was so weak....No wonder they had to give him a blood transfusion....My mind played jumpily with my memories of the blood-donors whom I had so frequently seen — appearing from nowhere....Doctors have their lists of donors catalogued according to condition and blood type — and there is a Central Bureau, licensed by the Board of Health, that has men who were always on a special diet; a strength-building, blood-building diet....Almost like a casting agency it was! Men whose "work" it was once every two weeks or so to part with blood whenever called at $25

to $50 a pint, depending on how well-to-do the patient was. ... Men who parted with blood as a "side line"!

When at last Miss Dillon came out to tell me, her voice rasping, that Dr. Beaston had gained consciousness and that there was hope, I got up and found my way out in a screen of tears.... Out on the street with the December wind blowing the tears cold against my cheek, I tried to pray for him, wondering if my prayers were any good.... It was so long since I had prayed....

Back with the kids, I could hardly keep my mind on their chatter or Mrs. Maxwell's imaginary ills. My heart was cold. If Beaston were my own father I couldn't have felt more terrified at the thought of his slim chance for life.... If I could search the world over with the privilege of picking a father, I couldn't have wanted a finer man than Beaston to bequeath me his name.... That such a man should die! When thousands of worthless, helpless, good-for-nothings walked the streets, and slept and ate and kissed and quarreled..... Some day, of course, Beaston would have to go. Like all of us. But to be snatched from life at the age of forty-nine — when all the world lay before him, and a good part of the world needed him and his miracle-working fingers.... Long, thin, strong fingers that seemed to have ten brains under the ten immaculate fingernails....

After supper, I phoned Finch, and she told me there was no change; nobody was giving out a syllable at the hospital. Later, she phoned me that Miss Dillon had received a cable from Mrs. Beaston, who said she would set sail

that night. They tried to tell him that—but he didn't seem to understand. He still called for her.

The next morning I went over again to the hospital. I got as far as his room. He was conscious, but too weak to speak. They were able to give him some nourishment, at least. When I telephoned Miss Dillon later, she reported well.

But at midnight Finch called me to tell me that he had suffered a relapse, and his strength was sinking.

Early the next morning I was back at the hospital. Again I got to outside his room. I spoke to one of the doctors I knew, who was just going in. Dr. Reed—I begged him to tell me—just a word. Beaston was conscious, he said—but in a very serious condition.

I shadowed that room, leaning up against the wall for a full twenty minutes, listening to the voices behind the closed door.

Presently the door opened, and I almost jumped at the shock of it. Three doctors came out, and at the sight of me, Dr. Reed hesitated. He went on talking to the others—each of them agreeing.

Dr. Reed turned to me.

"We're going to give him another blood transfusion," he said quietly. "It's the only chance."

"I'll call up some of my donors," said the other. "It's Type 4. I hope to God I can get one quickly."

I crossed over to him breathless.

"Listen," I gulped. "Please, doctor. If time means anything. I have Type 4 blood. I had my blood typed a long

time ago. I even gave it once in a ward. Please let me do it. Please!"

Dr. Reed stepped forward and squinted at me.

"How strong are you, Miss Hart?" he demanded curtly.

"I'm stronger than you are. And I have Type 4. Will you take me?"

He turned to the others.

"Let's type her and make sure," suggested the white-haired doctor suddenly. "If she can stand it, it will save us time."

The next fifteen minutes were too packed to remember. They got permission from Miss Dillon. They typed me again and found I was right. I had Type 4—and that's what Beaston needed. They put a stethoscope over my heart, and took my blood pressure. They decided I could stand it.

For all that they worked fast, I felt as if eternities were winding off in my head before they actually were prepared for the transfusion.

Beaston recognized me when I was brought into his room. He wheezed a greeting, with almost no voice behind it, and frowned at the thought that I was being used....

"Keep quiet, old man. You're a patient now," warned Dr. Reed.

And Beaston put back his head and closed his eyes.

I hadn't dared to speak to him. I couldn't trust my voice.

I lay down as I was directed on the stretcher that had been placed beside Beaston's bed. I kept my eyes away

from the huge cast that covered his entire right leg and side....

A board was put from the stretcher to the bed, and Beaston's arm and mine were laid side by side.... They put a towel over his eyes, and he muttered a thick-lipped protest, asking if they thought he was a goddam fairy....

One of the doctors talked to him quietly, keeping track of his pulse, while the others worked. They swabbed Beaston's arm and mine with alcohol, and then jabbed in the needle — from which was a glass syringe, marked all the way with tiny blue measurements. I watched with great interest at first; noting how they took fifty c.c.'s at a time from me, and then inserted it in Beaston ... 500 c.c.'s were needed altogether — five hundred cubic centimeters to a pint.... But presently the blue markings grew blurry before my eyes, and I turned away and watched Beaston's lips instead.... Wondering if I would see any color come back to them, and wondering if his voice sounded stronger already.... Thank you, Beaston — you were good to me — I haven't had so many friends.... My own mother ran away from me when I was a kid — and I made a lot of mistakes when I first started to strike out alone.... You were kind and you helped me out of some of those mistakes.... You love your wife, don't you? And she's coming to you. Do you know she's coming to you? She is on a boat right now, and probably she's crying herself frightful at the thought of you.... Hit-and-run driver.... I hope he gets summer complaint and poison ivy.... He ought to be shot.... I hope Mrs. Beaston isn't frightful from crying by

the time she gets to you.... You'd hate to see her frightful looking, wouldn't you? ...

"There," said Dr. Reed, and I suddenly felt his hand on my shoulder. "It's all over. That's great. Look — he's better already. Aren't you, old timer?"

Maybe Beaston answered. I didn't hear him. I was watching a man's hand swabbing my arm with alcohol and putting on a small dessing. The same man's hands grasped my arm and began lifting it up and down ... exercising it.... My arm was cold and stiff, but my eyes were no longer bleary.

The white-haired doctor helped me to my feet and steered me out of the room. Across the gleaming white corridor and into an empty room.

"You were an ace," he said, and patted my back. "I hope to heaven it does the trick."

"Oh, so do I!" I murmured, and smiled foolishly.

"Listen, child. You walk up and down. Keep walking up and down a bit. I'll send you a good drink of whisky. All right?"

"Sure. I'm fine."

He went out, and perhaps he forgot to send me the drink of whisky. About fifteen minutes later I found a nurse in the hallway. I asked her to send me a cup of coffee. She was awfully nice and kind. She brought it to me herself, and I drank it hot and black.

Dr. Reed knocked at my door and looked in.

"We gave him a hypo and he's asleep," he told me. "I think we've turned the trick. God in heaven, I hope so."

I nodded. The idea stuck in my throat.

"You lie down a while," Dr. Reed directed huskily. "You'll be all right."

"Sure. And I wouldn't care if I wasn't."

"We all feel — like that," said Reed, and went away as suddenly as he came.

# *Chapter Nine*

About two hours later I got back to the Richey place, feeling as good as new.

Mrs. Maxwell was prostrate—and Nanny was crying herself into a fever. The housekeeper's methods had worked with Desney, but the tiny one simply could not be barked at or bossed. She was a terribly high-strung little thing; and on my return I found her in a lather of perspiration from weeping and wailing.

I went over to her and picked her up, and bundled her comfortable tightly around her.

"Nanny, stop it. It's Miss Hart. Listen to me."

"You can't do anything with her," groaned Mrs. Maxwell, leaning wearily up against the bureau. "God knows, I've tried. And me in a weakened condition myself, too sick to be put under such a strain!"

"Go to bed, Mrs. Maxwell," I ordered. "Go to bed and rest."

Nanny, hugging me tightly, was crying inconsolably.

"Nanny," Desney called with as much voice as she had, "Miss Hart brought you some candy."

"Candy!" shrieked Mrs. Maxwell. "Who ever gave either of you candy?"

Desney sunk under the covers and buried her head with the sheet.

"Don't be a fool, Mrs. Maxwell," I said sharply, "I pretend their jello is candy. What sort of a nurse do you think I am?"

The withered old face quieted, but the nostrils still quivered. She raised a condemning finger toward me.

"That child is fit for a hospital," she announced ominously. "She's not just sick. She's in a dangerous condition. Surely you can see that! I called up Dr. Ranger!"

"You what?"

"I called up Dr. Ranger," repeated Mrs. Maxwell defiantly. "I couldn't do anything with the child. I felt it was best to call him. I'm not going to have her dying alone in this house — with her mother way off — "

Nanny's wails rose into a piteous shriek, and ended in coughing and spluttering. I got to my feet.

"Don't talk like that," I stamped my foot at Mrs. Maxwell. "There's no such foolishness as dying. I guess I know as much about these things as you do. What did Dr. Ranger say?"

"He didn't say anything. He was out. He's out of town. His assistant is coming over this afternoon."

I took a deep breath.

"All right. Now please go to bed and quiet yourself, Mrs. Maxwell. You're all unnerved. Please go."

The old woman threw a baffled glance at the forms of the two children, snorted, and made for the door. The moment she was gone I carried Nanny into the bathroom. I ran a warm bath, put some soda bicarb in it, and gave the child a soak. It was difficult drying Nanny. Her little body was so tender; her flesh covered with sore spots.... But I did it carefully, powdered her good, combed her hair, and rubbed some more vaseline into the scalp. Then I laid her all bundled up in a chair, while I made her bed. Meanwhile, Desney was blabbing of all that had happened while I was gone. As far as I could see Mrs. Maxwell really had done nothing to the kids. She pulled Nanny's hair by mistake — trying to comb out a tangle. The kid had gone hysterical....

I got them back to bed. Gave them some grapejuice, and drew the shades. I sat beside them while they fell asleep.

Then I went in and changed into my uniform. I heard the phone ring, and went out down to the library and answered it. It was Mrs. Richey!

She was very sunburned, she said, and you could almost tell it over the phone. She was just going for a short trip to Havana, and wondered how everything was before she left. I said fine, only Mrs. Maxwell wasn't so well. She said, you have my permission to feed her green apples. I said the kids were just about the same, and she said Dr. Ranger had already reported that! ( Strange, when he was

away! ) Then she said the *real* reason she called was that the liquor came and was too elegant for words, but it all went in last night's party which had been a riot — and she wanted some more as soon as my boy friend could rustle it. So I said, I'd see. Then she asked me if I'd please watch for a package from Udall and Ballou and put it in cold storage some place until she came home. It was a watch of great value and she didn't want the old witch to see it. So I said I would. Then she gossiped some more, giving me a list of things she had left at home, and could I get that lazy old hag to bundle them up and send them to her?

"Sure," I said. "And what about your chauffeur?"

"Oh, I don't know. He's dead and buried as far as I'm concerned. There's a choice mess about it, but my brother-in-law is attending to it, and I won't even let him tell me about it. I wouldn't be bored. I got a new car by the way. And I'm learning to drive."

On she gabbled, until she suddenly got tired — or bored, and hung up.

After that I went and took a nap myself. I dozed for about an hour; and then got up and started to fix the kids' vegetables and some creamed chicken. But all the time I was worried about Nanny. She was like a cold lump under my left ribs.

Desney woke up around four that afternoon, and I let Nanny sleep on. I fixed Desney in a comfy chair before the table in the sitting room and fed her. Desney was fun to talk to. She was getting real human, and I knew she

was going to be out of danger before very long. Already she had gained two pounds. She was still thin as a skeleton, still pale as a death-mask, with deep ridges under her huge hollow eyes — that had neither eyelashes nor eyebrows! But she could laugh. And every time I heard her laugh I felt like running up a flag.

A half hour later, the doctor came. I had never seen Standish, Dr. Ranger's "assistant." But the moment he came in, I breathed easier. He was too young to be let out alone. After the first ten minutes, however, during which I begged him not to wake Nanny (assuring him it was only a tantrum that had caused such a row), he thawed out. And how! Making goo-goo eyes, and sly cracks, and telling me of his past.

He stayed nearly an hour. And when he left I had an invite to eat chop suey in Chinatown. I had told him if I couldn't "get off" I'd send one of my good-looking friends. I intended to send Finch, who would accept any invite that meant a free meal. She'd probably go and bring her cop along....

After he left, Desney and I had a swell time out on the roof. The sun made me feel good, too. And I swear I was putting on weight like a prize-fighter off duty. Every time the kids ate, I had to eat and make a "party" out of it. Worst of all, I liked it. I had an enormous capacity for tasty food.

When it grew chill, and I had let her stay to see the colors of the sunset as long as I dared, I brought her in, gave her a good rub, and tucked her in bed. Her eyes were

closing already — from so much air. Nanny was still sleeping — fitfully.

I went in and jawed with Mrs. Maxwell. Gave her the "medicine," and told her she should take an egg in sherry every other day. That gave her the good excuse she was aching for to open some of Mrs. Richey's left-over stock. I handed her the list of things to send Mrs. Richey, and left her to scowl over them in peace.

I was just in the midst of taking a bath when the damn telephone rang. The cook was off that afternoon, so I made my way down to the library half-toweled, dripping and irritable. Miss Dillon was calling to tell me that Beaston seemed improved.

I thanked her and went back to the tub to cry. A cry is a swell tonic.

Mortie dropped in to see me a half hour later. Just to find if I could go for a drive. When he found me so upset he asked if there wasn't anything he could do to help me. I said yes, he could get a phone put in the kids' apartment — preferably in the bathroom — and he could go buy me a couple of wheel chairs on the insallment plan at the surgical house downtown. It would save me yanking the kids' beds, and we could tell Maxwell the hospital loaned them to us.

Poor Mortie took me at my word in both matters. The wheel chairs were up the next morning, and the extra extension phone put in two days later. A bootlegger has a way of doing things, somehow. Mortie was just a miracle

man. He might not be good looking, but he certainly was efficient....

At eight o'clock that night, Nanny woke up with a fevered expression. She was talking nonsense....

I was terrified. I did what I could....But she became frightfully sick.

I dragged my bed from the governess' room into the kids' room, and slept beside her that night.

The next day, I didn't go over to see Beaston. Miss Dillon was kind enough to phone me and tell me he was out of the dark....She hedged—her voice kindly hesitant—when she asked if I wanted my fee for twenty-five dollars for giving the blood. I simply said no.

She went on gabbing then. Mrs. Beaston would be home on Friday. Only three more days. They hoped a lot from that. And Beaston was really stepping out of it. It would mean about nine months laid up—nine months stretched with his leg and thigh immovable....All from a hit-and-run driver....

Lester called me, too. He wanted me to come to a concert. I explained how worried I was about Nanny. I simply couldn't leave her. He seemed irritated....And asked me whether I loved my job or him!

Things trailed along for a few days. Slothful days, that seemed to suck the vitality out of the little six-year-old that didn't deserve it. I think I was getting slightly cracked on the subject. All the shops in the country were filled with the red and tinsel of Christmas pretties....I never went

down town once. I hadn't any thought for Christmas.... Plague take Christmas and all its excitement....I didn't even stop to think of a tree for the kids....Time enough to think of that, if Nanny only improved....There was still two weeks to Santa Claus....

But Desney, slightly stronger each day, talked of nothing else. Christmas meant many things. It meant, most of all, that Juanita would be coming home from boarding school. Or, would she come home? Would she stay in the boarding school for the holidays like she did last year when Daddy had just died? Or, would she go down to Florida with Mummy?...Even Maxwell wouldn't answer these questions. She didn't know yet what Juanita was supposed to do. And she cared less.

A few days later, I got a call. Beaston wanted to see me. He wanted to thank me. Silly—and it made me feel like a gawk. But if he *wanted* to! Maybe he had felt like a gawk when I thanked him in bygone days....

I went up to the hospital one morning. And they let me go into Beaston's room. He was quite conscious, and surprisingly strong, it seemed to me. His wife was there—sitting beside his bed, her hand in his.

My first glimpse of Mrs. Beaston was unforgettable. He had called her a "pretty woman, too." She wasn't pretty. She wasn't beautiful. But there was a sweetness about her. A sweetness of facing things. Of having been through her plenty, and come out of it—unbitter! There was patience in her smile, and a lot of love in her eyes....She was a home-town woman, who had learned to be "smart and

attractive," but whose heart really wasn't in being "smart and attractive" — as if it were a duty she constantly reminded herself of, and attended to.... Her voice was very Boston. All her a's and o's had the sleeping sickness....

She got up, when I came in, and put her arms around me. It wasn't a gesture. She really held me close. I was too amazed to blubber. I blubbered later when I got out....

She made too damn much of it. She, a doctor's wife, ought to know how little it means to part with a pint of blood....

And Beaston laughed. It tickled him. To see his wife thank me was better than thanking me himself. She said she had a little "remembrance for me." And the tears clotted in my throat. She said she had bought herself a special extravagance in Paris, and now she wanted me to have it. It was a bracelet, she said — the first jewelry she had bought since she was married. And she wanted me to wear it on the arm that...

Oh, what's the use of going into it? She insisted she wouldn't be happy unless I had it, and wore it on *that* arm — "When I went out with my beau...."

I don't know how I accepted it.

I got out some way. And I blubbered in the same empty room across the hall where I had drunk coffee hot and black. Only I didn't blubber just about being held close. ...I was mad....Funny how hard it is to get your pay for things you've worked at to make a few dollars! And what makes people think you've got to be paid for some-

thing you wanted to do? Damn the bracelet from Paris! Who asked for it?

That was a rather red-letter day, however. When I got home Maxwell was hopping around on one foot. She had talked to Uncle Phil over the long distance. And his message was enough to give any one the heby-jeebies....

"He says he's let that chauffeur out of jail," Mrs. Maxwell's lips were thin and angry.

"Out of jail? Why, how could he?" I demanded.

"On bail!" Mrs. Maxwell enjoyed communicating the shock. "Thirty thousand dollars bail! That's what Phil Richey put up for that good-for-nothing chauffeur. And why? Why, do you suppose?"

"Why?"

"Because that chauffer could make it good and hot for the Richeys. Maybe Tishy's annoyed with him now. But Phil Richey is too wise to leave that loafer in jail and let him work up a spleen. *He* was Tishy's *lover!*"

"Who? The chauffeur?"

"Yes, ma'am! *Nick,* himself! So Nick is running loose now. And probably will be running loose for the next three or four months, until his case comes up. And that's why Phil Richey called me."

I was puzzling, with a rather pounding heart, just what Nick's freedom might mean....

"Are you listening to me?" Mrs. Maxwell nudged my arm. "I said, Mr. Richey doesn't want us to let him in. If Nick comes to this apartment we're not to let him in. See?"

I gazed at her.

"A hot chance he'd have of getting in here," I said grimly. "I'd call a cop first."

"You won't have to. I'll manage it." Mrs. Maxwell tossed her head vigorously. "The upstart — with his airs. Acting like one of the family, and giving me orders! *Me!* Me, who's — "

She stopped suddenly, and chewed her lip.

"You won't have to worry," she said after a moment. "I just wanted to warn you."

I began taking off my things. I wanted to see Mortie and ask him what he thought.

"As a matter of fact," Mrs. Maxwell decided thoughtfully, "I doubt if Nick would dare to show his face here. I very much doubt it. He's a coward underneath. And after all, the law has its eye on him now."

"Listen," I said. "How can he come to New York, if he's out on bail in Maryland?"

"I asked the same question myself," Mrs. Maxwell nodded. "And Mr. Richey says he's allowed to go any place as long as they know where he is. Until they are ready to prosecute. Of course, he's not allowed to leave the country."

"Maybe we could get somebody to shanghai him," I smiled. It was best to treat the matter lightly with Mrs. Maxwell.

The thought of Nick worried me greatly, however. And though Mortie refused to take it seriously, he gave me excellent advice on what to do just in case I should ever open the door and see a big black mustache.

That very evening Mortie had a man put heavy chain bolts on the front and the back door — so that we could open the door just that far whenever the bell rang. Mrs. Maxwell was very very thankful. It gave us some sense of security. But I got into the habit of waking up with a horrible feeling that Nick had broken into the apartment. ... And after working up enough courage I'd go around, lighting the way as I went, searching through the rooms, and making sure the bolts were secure on the front door and the delivery entrance....

The next day, two packages arrived that caused me quite a flurry of excitement. The one from Udall and Ballou which Mrs. Richey had warned me to put into cold storage. I didn't know what to do with it. Finally, I asked Finch's advice. Finch knew everything about money and valuables. On her suggestion, I hired a six-dollar safety deposit box at a bank and put the package in, unopened. When Mrs. Richey returned, I could at least have it safe for her.

The other package was for me. Just as small, in just as nice white paper, sealed just as importantly! The bracelet from Mrs. Beaston, with a charming note that was really worth framing. The bracelet was gorgeous. The kind bad women wear. Amateur bad women — because it wasn't so awfully large. But it had sixteen small diamonds in it — I counted them five times! And four sapphires. Blue as a gas flame.

Nobody could help liking it. Nobody in skirts. I tried it on, and decided I must take care of my hands. Somehow

the gift didn't seem an insult any more. I could realize what a sacrifice it must have been to Mrs. Beaston — the first jewelry she had bought since she was married....

It made me nervous. I wanted to wear it. I was proud of it on my wrist. On *the* arm. Like a badge! Like a stripe of honor! Yet I was scared something would happen to it. I went up and visited Finch, and showed it around to every one. Later, I showed it to Mortie who whistled, and to Lester whose hair got redder. Then I went down and put it in my new safety deposit box.

I had no time for bracelets. I barely had time enough to thank Mrs. Beaston....My mind was centered on only one growing worry....

Nanny was going steadily down! I was frantic, desperate, but determined to fight it through. If there *was* any chance. And, God, there must be a chance! Ranger was away; and that fool, Standish, was busy eating chop-suey and telling his past history...I was in no slight mess myself — going ahead and disregarding orders — running the case my own way — what a swell chance I'd have if something went wrong!

And who, if anybody, would help? Who cared if Nanny were getting weaker? Nobody expected her to get well... "Those kids are gonners"..."You're a fool not to keep your skirts clear of the whole business...."

Everything they had said was coming true — Nanny was worse — terribly worse — it didn't look as if she would last through Christmas.

I took stock one night about a week later, watching over her bed . . . almost listening to know whether the child was breathing . . . wrapping every inch of the thin anemic little body in oiled cotton. . . . She was too tender to rub now. . . . You could count the bones under her thin blue-white skin . . . bloodless skin . . . and the tiny baby face looking so grewsome — shadowed and hollow — against the pink pillowcase. . . .

Never shall I forget that night . . . I was nearly frantic . . . I couldn't let Nanny go . . . I just couldn't let her slip away. . . . But what could I do? I had done everything I could possibly think of. . . . Tried everything.

I made Ranger's office wire him, and he answered by sending a confrère of his up to see Nanny.

The new doctor came around 5 P.M. Not the youthful Dr. Standish this time, but a tall, angular, energetic man named Dr. Watchell, who stood over Nanny's bed thoughtfully and shook his head. . . .

"Have they tried the Murphy drip?" he asked gravely.

"No, doctor."

"Strange — they should have done it!"

In the sitting room, he fired questions at me, and I gave him the technical history of the case as I knew it.

He then went over Desney — and once more over Nanny, as if comparing notes. He gave the baby a hypo.

"I doubt if there's much chance," he shook his head slowly. "We'll try. But . . . you'd better tell the housekeeper to notify the mother."

He left shortly afterwards, promising to return within the hour.

And I knew suddenly why people got hysterical at the bedside of their loved ones.... I, who had so scorned relatives and friends who made so much blabber over the inevitable, had all I could do to hold on to myself.

The doctor told Mrs. Maxwell, and went on to wire Dr. Ranger. Ranger was out on the coast he said — on an exceedingly important case. He couldn't leave his patient, there, either....

Maxwell phoned Mrs. Richey. The number wouldn't answer.... The mother and the uncle were off in Havana somewhere. We tried to reach her.... We phoned every hotel we could find the name of.... Maybe she was between places — We couldn't reach her anyway....

Dr. Watchell returned presently, and gave Nanny a Murphy drip.

She expelled it!

*Not even that!* Not even that could she retain!

Dr. Watchell's eyes grew sharp and glinty.

"You see? There's not a chance!" he muttered sharply. "Can't they reach her folks?"

"We've tried every way, doctor. We're still trying."

"If you or the housekeeper want to have other doctors in on consultation..." he grated, "perhaps it would be as well. I don't want to shoulder this if there'll be any feeling.... Either of you are in the position of the parent — in charge here."

"Could they do anything?"

"Nothing. Nothing, except verify what is perfectly obvious," he snapped. "I wouldn't even suggest taking the child to the hospital.... I wouldn't dare move her!"

I shuddered. I knew what he meant. The shock of transferring and jolting through the streets would be sufficient to extinguish the tiny spark of life....

So that's all Dr. Watchell gave Nanny!

I could barely listen to the rest he said. He was insisting upon having a consultation so that all the responsibility should not be his....

When he left, I sat in the kitchenette, stunned.

He was a good doctor. I could tell that. I respected him and had faith in his word. That's what made it harder.... If only I didn't have faith in his word....

That night Mrs. Maxwell took Desney into her room. Desney seemed to realize something was frightfully wrong, though we tried hard enough to speak naturally to her.... She was a long while getting to sleep.

Around midnight, Dr. Watchell returned and again tried the Murphy drip. And again it was unsuccessful. Through her mouth, however, Nanny swallowed a few drops of whiskey and egg.

I promised the doctor to phone him every hour or so—or at the slightest sign of change for good or bad. He left me strict orders, and said he'd be back first thing in the morning.

For some time I hung about Mrs. Maxwell, who was storming the telephone company to move heaven and earth.

We sent a few more telegrams at any far-fetched suggestion that came to our minds.

At length, I commanded Mrs. Maxwell to go to bed, promising to rouse her at the slightest pretext. She, in turn, was to call me if Desney needed anything special.

Back in Nanny's room, I sat beside the little bed, rigid, benumbed. I seemed to have lost all feeling — all power of thought beyond watching my radium wrist-watch dial for the moments to obey Watchell's orders.... I never closed my eyes all night. My feet and hands were cold and I couldn't get up to find a blanket or a wrap. It was as if I were part of that chair. I could hear my own teeth chatter, but I couldn't seem to think one consecutive thought... as if my brain were alive but my mind were paralyzed.

Mrs. Maxwell crept in around dawn in a huge sack of a corduroy bath robe; unreal and uncanny without her make-up.... Standing by the window or sitting beside me, without a word between us.

At the first real touch of sunlight I rose.

"I better wash up," I heard myself saying. "The doctor will be back shortly."

She caught hold of my arm as I started past her.

"Listen, Miss Hart!" Mrs. Maxwell's breath was short and quick, and her eyes held a light that arrested me and yanked my mind back to my surroundings. "What would you think of — a milk bath?"

"A what?" I frowned.

"Giving the child a milk bath," she repeated tensely. "My

sister did that once, to her little five-week-old infant. It saved the child's life."

"Nonsense," I shook my head fretfully. "You can't absorb nourishment through the pores!"

"It saved that child's life."

"The child pulled through anyway," I insisted. "The milk baths never did it. Why, Dr. Watchell would know if..."

"Well, would you ask him?"

"Mrs. Maxwell! He'd think I was crazy."

"I'll ask him then. It might help. We ought to try everything...."

I put my hand on the bent, thin shoulder kindly.

"Of course, we all want to try everything," I said softly. "Ask Dr. Watchell by all means. Who am I to tell you whether it's any good or not? I've heard of it for beauty baths — for the skin. But I honestly don't think the doctor will approve."

Mrs. Maxwell looked at me steadily, and nodded.

"I'll speak to him, just the same," she decided. "In the meantime, I'll go try phoning again."

There was a new determination to her walk as she left the sick room. Somehow, I felt warmed and strengthened myself by her air of resolution.

I had barely finished fixing my hair with stiff, unwieldy fingers and buttoning up a fresh uniform when Mrs. Maxwell returned bearing a tray of steaming coffee and buttered toast!

She didn't seem to mind my not thanking her. I drank

the coffee gratefully. She drank some, too. When she put down the cup, she looked at me hopefully. And her voice was stronger.

"To-day's Nanny's birthday," she said steadily. "Maybe it will bring luck. Some good luck. Some change."

"Let's hope," I mumbled.

"For one thing," she continued slowly; "we'll hear from Tishy. She won't forget the birthday *surely*. Then we'll know where she is. That will be *something*."

"Yes, thank God. That will be something. You're a dear, Mrs. Maxwell. Shall I help you with Desney?"

"No, you have your hands full. I'll be back when I can."

I busied myself cleaning up the bathroom and the kitchenette that looked as if a cyclone struck them.

Dr. Watchell arrived at eight with two other doctors. They had their consultation.

And we were no better off than before.

Dr. Watchell remained behind the others and did what he could.

"I've got to go to the hospital," he told me shortly. "Keep my office informed. They can reach me at any moment. I'll be back around noon."

"Doctor!" I said. "Has the housekeeper talked to you about a milk bath? She's been wanting me to give the child one."

"Yes, she has," he sighed impatiently. "Ridiculous. What possible good would it do?"

"I know. But — "

He turned on me suddenly, frowning.

"But, what?"

"Well," I drew a deep breath. "She's not just a housekeeper, doctor. I thought you might like to know. She's a relative of the family — really."

"Oh!"

"I thought you might like to know."

"Why didn't she say so?"

"I don't know," I shrugged.

"Ummm. I'll have a talk with her. At any rate, the fool milk bath idea wouldn't get us anywhere. You keep up the routine I've just explained. Are you sure you understand everything?"

"Yes, Dr. Watchell."

For an hour after he left, Nanny seemed to revive slightly. Her pulse was more than a feather-flutter, and she opened her eyes. She knew me, for a period there, but she didn't attempt to speak. I talked to her quietly as I worked, until I saw she was straining to hear.... After I stopped speaking she closed her eyes again, and I was sorry. It was like losing her again....

At noon Dr. Watchell gave Nanny a hyperdermoclysis... a pint of saline solution which relieves thirst and stimulates the blood course.

It had a miraculous effect on her, of course. If I hadn't known so well the reasons, I would have felt truly hopeful. As it was, my heart lifted at the mere *sight* of improvement.

I phoned Watchell's office every hour or so, and at six I was able to give him a good word! *Nanny had retained a part of a Murphy drip!*

When Dr. Watchell came at six that evening, he seemed slightly less grim. I was to try the Murphy drip every three hours. And call him if he was needed through the night. He brought me a load more supplies — among which was an oxygen tank, which he himself used on the child — and he left minute instructions for me to follow throughout the night.

I was able to eat my own supper after that. Able to talk to Desney, and to comfort Mrs. Maxwell over the impossibility of reaching Letitia Richey. We hadn't heard from her on the birthday, after all!

Throughout my entire supper I listened to Mrs. Maxwell's insistent recital of the time a milk bath had helped her sister's baby.... Listened to her say that Dr. Watchell hadn't *really* objected to the idea at all! He merely told her, repeated Mrs. Maxwell endlessly, that milk baths might help — later on!

"Maybe they might," I agreed, as I got up and went back to Nanny.

I roused her to give a hypo of strychnine, and an hour later I gave her a gentle, cool sponge of tepid water and alcohol. With each hour, she seemed relieved — and the room didn't feel as cold and heavy with the atmosphere of death....

I didn't dare believe there was really a hope. Yet I wanted so terribly to believe. It was a *necessity* to believe.

I could work now. Move about freely and think. I wasn't like rubber inside and out. I was myself again, with just a slight hope!

But at nine, Nanny expelled the coffee given rectally. And my heart stood still. When Mrs. Maxwell, hovering beside me, spoke of a milk bath — I almost put her out of the room bodily.

I called Watchell's office. He wasn't there. I left a message in detail. About an hour later, I gave Nanny oxygen myself. About twelve minutes of it, and she seemed more normal.

I sat beside her, nervous as a witch, watching her every move — almost counting her respiration.

Around ten-thirty, Mortie came up. I hadn't seen Mortie for days, though he had phoned often. That was all right. He wasn't mad, and who in hell cared if he was? (But Lester was sore as the devil with me. We had quarreled. And I told Lester where he could go. I hadn't heard from him since.... I wouldn't hear from him. I knew Lester. He'd wait until I called him — and made up with him. Then he'd take me out and read me a lecture, proving how right he was and how wrong I was. But I wasn't in any mood to call him. I was hurt with Lester.)

But Mortie came around ten-thirty, and I never was so glad to see a human soul. I had been pacing the dark and painfully silent bedroom, stopping to look down on the lights of New York without really seeing them. Except that I saw the flashes from the Metropolitan tower — so far away it seemed — wondering how many more flashes I'd see before it was all over!

Maxwell brought Mortie in. We went into the kids' sitting room, and talked in whispers. Every so often Mortie

walked away, as if he couldn't stand the sight of us two women.... And he'd walk into the bedroom, still in his overcoat, his hands in his pockets, and stare down at the tiny bed.

I phoned Watchell's office again. He was still out on a call.

Mortie came back into the sitting room suddenly, just as Mrs. Maxwell's voice became high-pitched with me over the benefit of the milk bath idea. His throat was all red and so were his ears.

"Why keep harping on the milk bath?" I was insisting with Mrs. Maxwell. "If Dr. Watchell thought it was good, he would have ordered it. I have to obey doctor's orders. Good Lord, Mrs. Maxwell. Can't you see everything known to science is being done for the child?"

"If there was *any* chance — wouldn't you just try it?" Mrs. Maxwell pleaded, her voice thick with tears.

"Oh, *please!*"

"Well, hell's bells," Mortie broke in. "Can't we do *some*thing? How about a little brandy?"

I gazed at him stupidly. How about a little brandy? It might help.... It might.... Watchell had said to try it if necessary....

I nodded to him, mutely.

He seemed to produce it from nowhere. We put the bedlamp on.... It shone on the soldier clock that wasn't ticking any more. It had run down and Maxwell had forgotten where the key was....

Mrs. Maxwell put her arms under Nanny's shoulders,

and held her slightly upward.... She was crying, the old fool. Didn't she know people shouldn't cry? ... She had forgotten her mascara, and her eyes looked human.

Mortie poured the brandy onto a spoon for me. My hand shook as I took it....

I talked to Nanny. She didn't seem to hear me. Her eyes opened — only the white showing — and closed again from heaviness.... I forced a little of the brandy between her teeth. We rested her back again.

"I'll go out of my mind," I said suddenly, and held my chest. "If I could only think of something to do."

Mortie put his arm around me. He brought me into the sitting room.

"Listen, old girl," he said, his arm tightened. "What would you like to do, if you could?"

"Feed her!" I exploded. "Get something into her! But I can't. She doesn't retain anything...."

I sat down in the Morris chair, and put my head on its arm. I wasn't crying. I was only shivering with cold. I felt Mortie's hand on my shoulder.

"Listen, Lora," he said sternly. "You're blowing up!"

I lifted my head quickly.

"Get out!" I blazed at him. "Get out of here! Leave me alone. Get away from me!"

I stood up. Mortie gazed at me. There was an ugly look in his eyes for a moment. Then he puckered his lips like a baby. He reached for his hat that was on top of Ajax.... He walked out through the bedroom, and beckoned to Mrs.

Maxwell. I saw the two of them go out into the hall and close the door behind them.

The minute they were gone I wanted them. I went in to Nanny. She looked up at me, and recognized me! There was something in that look.... An appeal — as if she asked, wasn't there some way ... was I going to fail her?

I fell on my knees beside her bed, and took hold of her hand. Her eyes closed again contentedly.... I found myself crying — like a fool.... Tears are not for a sick room.... But I went on crying, and the first thing I knew I was praying ... gibberish prayers ...

"Listen, God. I'll do anything ... anything you want me to do.... I'll go to church.... I'll never take a drink again in my life.... I know I've been bad. I know the things I've done that I shouldn't — that I've never told any one I did — that I'm ashamed of.... But listen, God ... if you'll help me with this.... Show me what to do — tell me what to do.... Please, there must be something...."

I prayed myself weak. Or cried myself weak. Nanny's voice stopped me. She was calling — so softly that I had to put my ear against her lips.... She was calling for "Mummy."

And, God damn it, her Mummy wasn't here.... And we couldn't reach her!

Something made me stiffer than a corpse.

I went over to the window, and stood holding the curtains of pink and blue silk, looking out at nothing.... Faint and muffled, through the door, came the sound of

Mrs. Maxwell — crying.... Poor old devil! Standing out there — her heart breaking, just because I wouldn't try her idea...

A milk bath! Of all the crazy...

Why was it a crazy idea? It certainly couldn't hurt! Even Dr. Watchell had said it couldn't hurt! What if it might help? Why was it a crazy idea?

I turned, shot with action. I went to the phone and called up Watchell. He wasn't there! I demanded the number where he might be. I called it. He had just left!

I sat, and wondered how mad I was. Insane from straining my eyes on Nanny's tiny face and form for some sign — from trying not to hear the weeping of the old woman outside the door.... She loved the kid too. ...She was a member of the family.... Why shouldn't she...?

I got up and ran to the bedroom door.

"Mrs. Maxwell!" I called.

The whole place seemed lighted. Mrs. Maxwell, her face and eyes swollen and red, was leaning against the wall. She straightened up — and the look she threw me stabbed me to the heart.

Behind her, from some doorway, appeared Mortie — his coat still on, his hat crunched in his hand. He had waited. And now he ambled forward, as if half ashamed to show himself.

"Mrs. Maxwell," I said resolutely. "Get me milk. How much milk have you?"

"I don't know," she panted. "I think..."

"Don't think!" I snapped. "If you want to try that milk bath, go get me all the milk you can find in the kitchen."

"Oh, thank God!" she cried. "Miss Hart! You'll never know... Oh, thank God!"

"Hurry!" I broke in on her. "If there isn't enough, send Mortie out to buy some. He can get some at any delicatessen."

Mortie spoke. His voice full of life.

"How much do you want, Lora?"

"All I can get. Quarts and quarts. Eight or ten quarts — all you can get...."

"I gotcha!" His hand went up understandingly. He jammed his hat on his head, and started down the corridor purposefully — out of the apartment.

"Mrs. Maxwell," I called to the old woman who was heading for the kitchen. "Get me a great big pan. A big wash basin or something. And hurry.... The biggest in the house."

She had turned, braced against the wall. Her eyes fixed on me, over the length of the lighted corridor.

Her hand lifted feebly.

"I gotcha," she half whispered.

I went back into the bedroom, and bent over Nanny.

"Listen, baby," I said softly. "Lora is going to make you well. Hear me? You just wait. You be good and quiet, and don't cry."

She didn't seem to hear me. She made no move to nod, or answer....

I rested her back, and went into the kitchen. Snapped on

the lights, and put a match to the gas range. I went and got towels, and laid them over the radiator to heat them up.

Mrs. Maxwell came with the big basin. It was a washing tub of nickel. It wasn't as big as I wanted but it would do.... She also brought two bottles of milk, and I had a bottle in the kids' refrigerator.

I cleaned out the huge basin. Scoured it good.... Then I opened the three bottles of milk, and poured their contents into the basin....

I thought Mortie would never come. I suppose it took time to get to a delicatessen from Riverside Drive.... I know he hurried, because when he appeared his breath was short, and he could hardly speak.

His arms were full of a huge brown bag, which he hugged to him like it was his sweetheart....

"There," he said. "Fifteen quarts! A hell of an errand for a bootlegger!"

I took them with an approving glance. And began emptying them into the basin. Mrs. Maxwell picked up a bottle and emptied it, too. Mortie threw off his coat and hat, and did likewise. We needn't have used it all, I suppose. But we did. With the basin set over the gas flame—heating the milk.

I left Mrs. Maxwell to watch the milk. And went in to Nanny. Bundling her up and lifting her carefully, I carried her out to the kitchen, and sat—undressing her carefully, so I wouldn't hurt her and make her whimper.... I talked to her all the while—and so did Mortie.... I couldn't shut him up—and I didn't try....

He lifted the huge basin down to the floor. I lowered Nanny carefully into the milk. I fixed a hot-water bottle against her shoulders, for a pillow — so the basin's edge wouldn't hurt her....

She closed her eyes, and I looked at my watch. On my knees, I bent over, sopping the milk around her body.... It was only warm.... The three of us lifted the basin, Nanny in it, back up to the range ... with the flame burning low. I got the thermometer, and put it in, watching the heat of the milk carefully. Later we put out the gas, and left the basin on the stove.

The three of us watched — breathlessly — Mortie and Maxwell and I.... I kept track of Nanny's pulse, and when I felt it quicken the slightest bit, I told them, with shining eyes.... The child stopped quivering and whimpering.... She seemed to relax gratefully, and after twenty minutes, her breath came more regularly....

"The cotton," I said to Maxwell, and she shuffled off eagerly.

I didn't try to dry Nanny, when I lifted her out. I rolled her in the cotton, like she was in a coccoon, and carried her back to the bed. She held on to my hand for the first time in three days.... Mrs. Maxwell sighed profoundly and went off to Desney, mumbling something under her breath about God....

"Listen, Mortie," I said to the figure that was leaning helplessly against the sitting room threshold. "I'm going to do this every three or four hours. See what I mean?"

He nodded.

"I think maybe she will suck in some nourishment through her pores. She certainly can't get it through her stomach. See what I mean? Now you go to Walker Gordon first thing in the morning, and order me eight quarts every four hours."

"Walker what?"

"I'll write it out. You see it's done — some way."

"Sure, Lora."

"I think she'll sleep now." I sat on the straight chair beside Nanny's bed. "It's half-past eleven. You go out and get me enough milk for to-night. I'll want it at three, and again at seven. You'd better see I get it at eleven in the morning, too. Will you do that?"

"Did the Mayor get another term?" he grunted.

"Thank you, Mortie."

He started toward the bedroom door.

"Tell Mrs. Maxwell to try to get Mrs. Richey again. And then to go to bed. I'll wake her when I need her."

"Yeh. I'll be back. How will I get in? Can't I get Maxwell's key?"

"She wouldn't give it to you. And don't leave that latch up. I don't trust people out on bail.... I'll hear you ring all right."

"S'long."

I was alone again. Was I crazy in thinking that Nanny had benefited by the mad idea? Sure, I was crazy. The first one wouldn't do much good....

She was sleeping, though. She was sleeping. She wasn't just lying in a daze.... She was sleeping....

At two o'clock I gave her a coffee rectum — and she retained it. Watchell phoned me shortly after and I told him.... He said nothing about the bath — and I trembled with relief....

I looked out at the lights again. Maybe there *was* something in prayers....

The lights of the Metropolitan Tower flashed again Red — one, two, three whites — Red again....

It didn't scare me so much. I leaned back and closed my eyes.

That whole night was a fit of insanity. All I remember was that Mortie and Maxwell were there whenever I seemed to need them. I don't remember if we ever spoke. I don't even remember that Mortie was around all the next day — every four hours, and all the next night through.... He tells me he was — making a lousy milkman of himself....

All I do remember was that when Dr. Watchell came at noon the next day, and again at noon the next, he seemed puzzled at Nanny's condition. When, on the third day, he said, "You know, I think there's some hope!" I nearly fainted.

"I must wire Ranger," he said quietly. "It's nothing short of a miracle."

I had told him the day before what I was doing. He had listened gravely, and nodded. Quite approving. He told me to keep up the baths if they seemed to help. Of course I

had to tell him, even if he had fired me. I didn't dare keep on with them unless some doctor knew....

"Those hypos," he continued now, "are miraculous. It's a wonder Ranger hadn't ordered them. You keep them up, Miss Hart. Morning and evening. And I think we can start with nutritive enemas! Twice a day!"

I did keep them up. Desney was petulant at my neglect of her. But I wasn't the only one who was working. Maxwell was marvelous with Desney, and the child was beginning to like her. The cook came in and did all the cooking of the vegetables....

But I concentrated on Nanny. Her hypos, her milk baths, and her nutritive enemas. They were working. She was drawing in nourishment — slowly.

Once a day and once a night, later, I sopped her all over with cod liver oil. The whole bedroom smelled of it. All the pretty pink and blue things....The fishy smell pervaded the entire quarters. But who cared? Nobody but Mortie, who stuffed his nostrils with cotton....

Dr. Watchell was a genius. He worked as hard for Nanny's recovery as any human man could. For all my hysteria of the night, I know, as I originally knew, that the milk baths weren't really responsible for Nanny's improvement. I know it was Dr. Watchell's work — all of it. But nobody could convince Mrs. Maxwell of such a thing. The milk baths had saved Nanny's life as they had saved the life of her sister's baby! The Lord had watched over us — and the Lord had been good! He had shown us the way.

And Dr. Watchell was big enough not to disabuse Mrs.

Maxwell's mind. True enough, the Lord had certainly helped us. We knew how — and Mrs. Maxwell knew how. The fact that we believed in two different proofs of the Lord's miraculous ways really didn't matter.... I know one thing. I know I glowed with admiration for the man when Dr. Watchell complimented Mrs. Maxwell on the milk bath idea, and told us to keep it up. Certainly Nanny was improving; and the additional diet that Watchell wrote out I stuck to like a burr. It was a swell diet. That man knew what he was doing. He had wired Ranger, and he had wired and phoned Mr. Phillip Richey.

That bozo — Uncle Phil — had pulled a nice one. He had phoned the house and raised Cain because Maxwell and I tried so hard to get in touch with Letitia! Mrs. Richey, it seemed, was ill herself — with her usual *ptomaine!* And was under doctor's care down South. They had returned from Havana prematurely because of her illness. Why had we so worried them? Well, the child *didn't* die, did she? We were just alarmists. We were, please, to understand that he regarded only the doctor's reports as important, and we were not to disturb or upset Mrs. Richey!

Mrs. Maxwell and I jawed plenty about that phone call. A lot he knew what danger we had pulled the kid through. And a lot he cared! Well, the devil with him. Nanny was past the crisis now. Whether he was interested or not! Dr. Watchell was coming daily, and for the first time Nanny was getting attention and help....

Juanita came home from boarding school for the Christmas holidays! She arrived on the 21st of December, and by that time we were breathing a bit more freely about Nanny.

Juanita was a great disappointment to me at first. She was a beautiful child. Tall, and well developed and blonde like her mother. She had just passed her sixteenth birthday in the boarding school—but she could easily have claimed eighteen.

Yes, she was pretty. But she was as quiet as a mouse. A wise and sophisticated youngster in her way; but somehow all the spunk was knocked out of her. She wasn't sick, that I could make out; and she became quite nasty when I even suggested such a thing. But she said very little, and liked to sit on the terrace, beside Desney's wheel chair, and gaze out over the city. She only picked at her food. And certainly she was no gay companion to have around. She made a point of completely ignoring me, but sometimes I found her eyes puzzling over me, when I turned around suddenly and glanced at her.

Most of all she resented Mrs. Maxwell. She obeyed her with a snooty silence, and never addressed a direct remark to her. Mrs. Maxwell, therefore, was wounded, and began making snippy remarks about Juanita's being "like her mother." Whereupon the kid would get white and say, "You shut up!"

A nice family gathering. With about as much Christmas spirit as an aquarium.

Christmas came.

We celebrated it. But it wasn't a success. With our tiny tree, aglow with colored bulbs; and our little presents, and our tea-party, and the stockings hung by the sitting-room fireplace — it wasn't a success. Desney, I think, was the only one who liked it. Nanny was too weak to enjoy it. She merely smiled. A beautiful smile. Satisfied that she had the big rag doll she once said she wanted, and the canary Mortie had brought to her....

Juanita didn't try to enjoy it, though she was nice to the kids. She took the presents we had for her — little handkerchiefs, and a fountain pen, and some new phonograph records, and really made an effort to like them. But they just didn't mean anything....

Mrs. Maxwell had actually opened her purse wide enough to give a few presents. To me she gave a Chinese vase. In return, she didn't seem any too satisfied with the umbrella Mortie and I gave her. I think she expected a lot more.

From Mrs. Richey came a twenty-dollar goldpiece for Mrs. Maxwell, for me, and for Juanita "to buy what we'd really like." She sent the two babies hand-made silk and wool sweaters with ducks appliquéd on them. With a note kissing them — and missing them.

Lester had asked me to dinner, but I felt I couldn't go. So Lester sent me flowers, rather gorgeous flowers, with a note saying, "When you get out of that jail, call me up. It's a hell of a Christmas for a supposed fiancé, and don't blame me if I get a blonde. Yours for safer and saner Christmases."

It made me feel bad. And that made a hell of a Christmas out of it for me! I felt he wasn't fair. Men are so unreasonable. They have such a weirdly sane outlook on things; and nobody's more exasperating than a person who has all the *logic* on his side.

Mortie gave me the surprise of my life, however. He took me out on the windy terrace of the Richey apartment (where we could have some privacy), along about four in the afternoon, and showed me two packages. One little and one big. He said I could have one or both — and he hoped I'd take both. I took the big one, however. A rather beautiful brown fitted suitcase. The little one only made me feel more lonesome for Lester. A plush box with a ring in it.... Poor Mortie. *His* Christmas was spoiled when I refused it.

So, all in all, I was glad when the day was over. Nobody liked it, except the kids. And I suppose that's what Christmas is for. Only grown-ups also *wish* they'd like it, too,— and always feel a tiny bit disappointed.

One evening, a few days after Christmas, we were all in the kids' sitting room. Desney was having an eight o'clock feed. Juanita and Maxwell and I were talking dispiritedly. Juanita might not have liked us, but she always stuck around. She seemed to dread being alone.

The doorbell rang, and Mrs. Maxwell got up with a grunt and went to answer it. She was gone some time, and when she returned, her face was livid.

"Do you know who that was?" she demanded, breathlessly.

"Who?" I looked up and squinted.

"Nick! Thank God for the chain on that door. I never was so scared."

Juanita jerked forward, and spilled Desney's mug of milk.

"I'm — sorry — " she mumbled whitely.

"I told him to get out and stay out," Mrs. Maxwell continued, her amazing courage apparent in her tones. "I told him nobody was here. He said not to be scared. He didn't want anything of any of us, and meant no harm. He laughed at the chain bolt, and said his real business was in Florida — not here. Then he said he wanted his pass book for his bank. I told him to wait, and found it for him. I passed it to him through the little space, and slammed the door in his face."

Juanita had got to her feet. Her hand was at her throat.

Now she muttered a low, voiceless sound, and rushed past us, out of the room through the kids' bedroom, and disappeared.

I stared after her, stunned. So did Maxwell.

"What in the name of God — " began Maxwell.

We looked at each other. Suddenly the old woman's face tightened.

"I'll go talk to her."

"No," I said quickly. "Better not. Leave her alone."

But Mrs. Maxwell was too fired with righteous curiosity. She left. And I went on feeding spoonful by spoonful of

purée of chicken to Desney. My mind was not on her childish talk.

A few moments later Mrs. Maxwell returned.

"She's in her bedroom," she reported in a hushed voice. "And her door is locked. She's crying."

She sat down, and watched me fix up both the kids. Neither of us said what was on our minds.

For the next few days, I tried not to show how scared I was myself over that visit from Nick. Perhaps he *was* going to Florida. Perhaps he wasn't going to bother any of us....But just the same!

I watched Juanita closely, but I never said a word to her about the chauffeur. I made Maxwell shut up on the subject too. Juanita, for all her attempts to appear normal, was going to pieces. The day before New Year's she had a dizzy spell.

When Dr. Watchell came, I asked him to look the girl over. He did talk to her. But she insisted she was just getting over a heavy cold that she had in boarding school.

New Year's went by, unnoticed.

A couple of days later Juanita started morning sickness. She had begged me not to send the doctor to her again, and I didn't want to frenzy the child.

One morning I went into her room, and sat on the side of her bed. Her eyes wouldn't meet mine.

"Now, listen, Juanita," I said slowly. "I want you to know I'm your friend."

"Please—I'm all right," she gasped.

"There's no need of being frightened with me," I soothed. "I want to help you, Juanita. Now, listen, child, I'm a nurse. You can't fool me, you know. I know what's the matter with you. I know better than you do. And there's nothing to be terrified about, dear. I want you to tell me the whole story. Will you?"

Her eyes searched my face, pleadingly. She grasped the bedclothes up against her chest, as if to protect herself, and her breath came in dry sobs.

"You're not going to be able to keep it a secret," I explained kindly. "You might as well tell me, Juanita. Nobody's going to hurt you. And nobody's going to blame you. Only you've got to let us help you. If we know — we can make it all right."

She wet her lips, and opened her mouth to speak.

Then, with a spasm of shudders, she fell forward on me. And through her passion of tears she told me —

I couldn't bring myself to talk to Mrs. Maxwell.

But Dr. Watchell came, a few hours later, on his daily visit, and I brought him inside to the huge living room, and told him every word from start to finish. I had worked myself up into a rage by then. The tones of Juanita's voice — the fright — the terror — were still ringing in my ears. The scare she had been through that Thanksgiving night was more terrible to her than her sickness....

"If you don't have that man arrested, I will!" I said to Dr. Watchell. "I don't care if it's the last thing I do. Noth-

ing's going to stop me from going to the police. Nothing!"

"You're right," Watchell nodded fervently. "I hesitate to take the step, however. This family is very..."

"God damn this family!" I flared. "Excuse me, doctor — but God damn them! Everybody has been thinking of this family for the past year. If I had made a holler when I *first* came on the case, maybe Juanita wouldn't have been attacked like that! It's criminal. It's unspeakable. And if nobody else feels responsible, *I* do."

"I don't blame you," Watchell agreed earnestly. "But, Miss Hart, this isn't my case. It's Dr. Ranger's case."

"You're responsible right now!"

"I know, but I don't want to do anything that reflects upon him in the profession...."

"Oh, God," I said. "The profession. Always the profession. Well, *I'll* do it. I haven't anything at stake. I don't care what it costs me! I'm through playing turkey with all of them."

I threw myself in a chair, and closed my eyes to keep from saying all the things I shouldn't say. When I opened them I saw Dr. Watchell standing by the table, turning a small jade piece over and over in his hand.... His shoulders were stooped, and his eyes were baked in thought....

I watched him. There was something in his very posture that gave me hope.

He turned quietly.

"Miss Hart," he said quietly, "you let me handle it. I want to do it as much as you do. I'll warn Ranger — and let him take the consequences. He can think up his own

plea. Only let me handle it. We won't implicate him, if we can help it. Possibly we can do that!"

I stood up, weakly.

"I'll never open my mouth about Ranger," I said, forcing the promise. "I swear to you I'll never mention him."

"After all," said Watchell grimly, "even Ranger has a daughter — by his first marriage. Did you know that? ... Let me go in and speak to the child, now. Sixteen years old! Jesus! The man ought to be boiled in oil."

They got Nick, the chauffeur, that night.

It wasn't difficult. He was still in New York — and the Maryland authorities were able to wire the police where to find him. Dr. Watchell, Mrs. Maxwell, Mortie and myself went down there to identify him. We went over with him to the court....

At midnight, Mrs. Maxwell and I phoned Florida again. This time Letitia herself answered the phone! I told her the whole story, without sparing her feelings. She must have fainted at the phone.

An hour later Mr. Phillip Richey phoned. I told him too. And I told him how we had arrested Nick. Scandal or no scandal, the Richey family might just as well prepare to face their problem. I told him if Letitia Richey had any feeling in her body, she'd come to Juanita as fast as she could.

He was fit to be locked up. For all the staggering dread and fear in his voice, his temper was classic.

"You're fired!" he yelled at me through the phone. "You

get off that case this minute and leave that apartment. I don't want you there another ten minutes! You understand? And believe me, you'll have plenty to answer for when I get up there. I'm leaving on the first train in the morning."

I felt awfully tired suddenly, as I stood with that phone in my hand. Tired — and incompetent.

I heard the voice rage on, demanding Dr. Watchell's telephone number.

Then he talked to Mrs. Maxwell. *She* jawed him right back, but I didn't even listen....

I couldn't leave the house in the next ten minutes. I had no intention of doing so, Uncle Phil's temper notwithstanding, I couldn't leave until another nurse came to take over my duties.

Around 6 A.M. Dr. Watchell phoned, telling me how Mr. Phillip Richey had long-distanced him, and regretting that I couldn't remain on the case. He said he resented having to change me, but felt it best not to rile the uncle further at the time.

At 7 A.M. a new nurse came. A nice, rosy-cheeked girl named Bush, who was full of questions, quite keen on the excitement and mystery of the case, and very impressed with the "trust" her precious Dr. Watchell had evidently committed to her with elaborate warnings.

I stayed an hour and a half, showing her everything and explaining. She was cheerful, eager and interested, and charming to the kids.

The kids, on the other hand, watched her with aston-

ished and puzzled eyes. I hardly dared meet their bewildered glances. I told them I was called away for a few days; made them promise to be good. And kissed them good-by.

I did have a lengthy talk with Juanita, assuring her no harm or blame or trouble would come to her. Poor kid was awfully sick. Her nerves had broken. I very much doubted if she would ever be able to see things through. She wasn't strong enough.

I had a cup of coffee with Mrs. Maxwell, and her righteous indignation and her earnest praise almost finished me. I had "made a well woman of her" and "saved her from God knows what-all"! And I had "done more for those babies than any one but her would ever know." She was on the warpath. Her mouth all fixed to "tell a few things" to Mr. Phil and Tishy....

Her faded eyes were full of tears as she bade me good-by at the elevator.

My own throat was like granite. I was fired from the case in the end....It was all over!

How he had heard about it, or expected me, I don't know. But Mortie was in his car, outside the apartment house waiting for me. I could almost have kissed him. I got in quietly as he opened the door.

"Don't you mind what happens, Lora," he said with a peculiarly nasal voice. "You did the right thing. And I'm going to stand right beside you — all the way."

"I'd better go over and see Miss Dillon," I said tonelessly in answer.

We started over to the St. George hospital. Mortie knew enough not to mention matters further. His Chrysler was acting up terribly — spluttering and stalling every few blocks. He used it as conversation, swearing he'd turn the damn thing in, and that he only used it anyway so nobody could possibly suspect him of "wanting to get anywhere with neatness and dispatch." I half listened to him. I knew what he was saying, but I didn't care. I even refused the tempting breakfast he suggested to me.

At the hospital, I asked him to leave me. Even after I saw Miss Dillon, I wanted to be alone.

We said good-by awkwardly, and I went into the hospital. Already I felt as if I didn't belong there....

I told Miss Dillon just what I had done, and asked her to please put some one else on the case right away. Dr. Watchell would handle the case until Ranger got back from the coast. Ranger was on his way now. If our present system with Nanny and Desney were continued (and it would be, for Dr. Watchell would see to that), it wouldn't be long before they'd pull out of it. Nothing could be done for Juanita — except what time and any doctor and nurse could do.

Miss Dillon was white over the case. Only the fact that a doctor stood behind me, kept her from breaking into a tirade. Even at that she was bitter. Dr. Watchell meant nothing to her. But a nurse from her hospital involved in such a case!

I said I was sorry, but I'd do it all over again.

I went home to the little apartment Finch and I shared. Glad that Finch was out on her day work, and that I had the place to myself....

Mortie rang my doorbell around four that afternoon. He told me I was no movie-actress when I'd been crying. He asked if I wouldn't like to go for some air. I said no. I had enough air. But he came in, uninvited, and sat beside me in the living room, very uncomfortable at the silence. Presently he got up and went out to the kitchenette. I could hear him crack ice.... But I didn't care....

He came back again after a few moments, and handed me a highball. I looked at it solemnly. Then I took it.

I drank a good swallow of the high ball. He had made it very strong. I was glad. I needed it strong.

"Lora," said a quiet male voice, "will you marry me?"

I looked up at him.

"Oh, Mortie," I snuffled—"you're *sweet!*"

He bent over and kissed me. He held me tight, and let me cry.

The gang, that night, had it in for me.

Maloney said, "I told you so." If she said it once she said it fifty times. Finch said she hoped I was satisfied.

I wouldn't tell them any of the details, I just wouldn't talk.

Finch wasn't as interested as normally, anyway. She had her mind full of a new bombshell of her own.

Stanley Forbes had changed hospitals! He had left the West Side, and gone to the Maxim! That roused Finch's sisterly excitement, and she had questioned Vivian closely.

Vivian confessed that she had been secretly married to Howard Reggs, the wealthy blue-blooded interne for nearly a month! Her supposed fiancé, Stanley Forbes, had heard about it — and erased himself in his own sweet way.

Finch was sorry for Stanley. She tried to see him, and he had sent her a rather ribald message!

But Finch was proud of her Vivian. Married to a wealthy boy like Howard Reggs! The little devil! "And her insisting upon continuing with the training! Like she *had* to work for a living...."

The next morning I moved to a hotel. I couldn't face being around the girls. I called up Lester and asked him to take me to dinner. He hemmed and hawed, and said he was sorry — he didn't know I'd be free, and he was going to a concert and having dinner first with some one....

"A girl?" I asked, hollowly.

"Well, nobody that matters," said my red-headed darling with embarrassment. "After all, Lora, I thought you were sewed up for the winter."

"All right, Lester."

"I'll call you up."

"Sure. All right."

He hung up. He hadn't even asked me if I was sore!

I had to admit it. I was in hiding. Only three people knew my hotel, and could phone me. Dr. Watchell, Mortie — and Lester. And Lester didn't call.

Mortie called me all the time. And brought Mona over to see me. Mona, in her sixth month, looked pale — and

lovely. There wasn't a scared bone in her body. Nor a regretful one. She said as soon as this was born, she was going to start having another. A "regular baby," she called it. She was bright, cheerful, and peaceful, all in one. She adored Mortie. And when we were alone a few moments (while Mortie went down to see if the car was locked—not that he cared a damn if he lost it!), she pleaded with me to give Mortie a break....Mortie loved me so, she said. She thought he'd even quit bootlegging for me. I could make a man of Mortie....I said he was a pretty good specimen just as he was. But marriage and love weren't on my mind right then....

Dr. Watchell called me the day Ranger arrived in town. I met him at Ranger's office, and we three talked. Ranger was as nervous as a rat. I told him quietly just how I felt. I said I wasn't sorry, and was perfectly willing to go through with it if I never got a job again in any hospital. I said I didn't see why he should feel implicated.

"As far as I know," I said, looking him straight in the eyes, "you did everything you *could* for those children. Everything you could under the circumstances. I can swear to that."

The stubby, grayed little man leaned forward and stared at me as if he had never seen me before.

"Nobody could say enough for Dr. Watchell here," I repeated my practiced speech carefully. "He really saved Nanny. No question about that. But then, you were away. Certainly you wouldn't have commissioned a man like

Dr. Watchell to take your place, unless you meant the *best* by those children."

"Of course," said Ranger. But his voice cracked. "I'm glad you understand that, Miss Hart."

After that we talked freely. And Ranger's violence in regard to Nick quite equaled our own. The pitcher was broken and the milk was spilled. Mr. Phillip Richey would have to think fast.

That evening around eight o'clock, Dr. Watchell phoned me again. Mrs. Richey wanted to see me. Wouldn't I please go over and talk to her? It was the only sane thing to do — to go over and talk to the mother.

"I'd rather face a thousand Rangers than one Letitia Richey. If I could ever have guessed, on that cold windy walk over to Mrs. Richey's, what the night's visit was going to mean! Strange how we head right into things without even a warning sense to guide us. Unable to know what the next few hours might bring!

Perhaps it was a good thing I *didn't* know. Perhaps my refusal would have driven Mrs. Richey to an even worse conclusion. The answer is, that I *did* go — to face a situation that is still talked about in hospitals to-day... that ended in my being decorated with a medal — for all that I am still really in disgrace, and suspended from my own hospital because of the trial I am to go through! ...But no medal, or no breathless, unbelieving and hilarious reputation among my friends and associates was worth what that evening cost me....

If I've told the details of this fantastically incredible, yet literally true story once, I've had to tell it five thousand times to gaping listeners who demanded explanation after explanation that I couldn't supply — for I didn't remember....

One thing I know. No psychic sense forewarned me of anything particular. As I marched over to Mrs. Richey, I had only one thought. The dread of meeting her, and having to face her questions and unreasonable petulance. ...I think I must have lost ten pounds with nerves between my hotel and the top floor of that Riverside Drive apartment house.

Mrs. Richey herself let me in. She looked like a hurricane had struck her. Her face was gaunt like Nanny's, and her hair was lusterless. She stared at me as if she were looking at a ghost.

Then she beckoned with her finger. And I entered. There was the smell of liquor on her breath.

"Mrs. Maxwell is out," she said as if that were important. "She left — about an hour ago — after a row. I guess she's gone to her sister's. I sent my maid after her."

She stood then, helplessly, after she had told me that much, as if she didn't know what to say next.

"How are the babies?" I asked aimlessly.

"I think they're all right. Dr. Watchell says — "

"I know. He's been phoning to me about them."

She continued to gaze at me. The pupils of her eyes

were dilated. Her thin fingers were pulling at the pale blue dress she wore....

"I wish... I wish you'd come back to them!"

I shifted my glance and studied the wall-paper.

"I heard all you've done for them," her words tumbled out shamefacedly. "They've told me. They all told me. And mostly Mrs...."

Her voice broke. She took hold of my fur collar and pulled it with little jerks.

"Please, won't you come back to them? You hate me — don't you?"

"Mrs. Richey — please. You're getting..."

"You hate me! You know I'm a bad mother. I've been such a bad mother! Oh, tell me I'm not a bad mother!"

She was crying now, with nervous hunching of her shoulders. I put my arm around her. Her body was so cold....I started to walk with her to her bedroom.

"You'd better go to bed," I said, as I got her inside.

She sat on the edge of the bed, and drew in her sobs.

"I never want to see a bed!" she stormed childishly. "I want you to tell me you don't hate me!"

"Of course I don't. Don't be a fool."

She got to her feet again, her hand on the bed-post.

"Tell me I haven't been a bad mother!"

I glared at her. Such downright stupidity. Still only thinking of herself. Only concerned with clearing her own conscience....

"Don't look at me like that!" she cried. "Don't!"

She turned, her hands above her head, clawing at the air.

"I can't stand it!" she shrieked. "I can't live through it. I didn't know. How could I know? What have I ever done? And it's all my fault. All my fault! *God Almighty!...*"

She stopped short. Her back was to me, and her figure was suddenly rigid.

I didn't move. I thought she was staging a scene. I was nervous and uncomfortable, and wished I was a thousand miles away. I wasn't going to soft soap her. And who was I to give her a telling off?

Then suddenly I cried out in terror.

With a sudden lunge, Mrs. Richey made for the two rose-draped French doors. She threw them open, crying out wildly, and darted out onto the terrace.

I made after her like a streak....

I really don't know how it happened. I don't know just what happened. I know I caught hold of her ankle, just as she had climbed to the ledge and made to leap....

She fell, head downward with a scream that went through me like a knife....The force of her jump nearly yanked my arm out of its socket....I don't know how I held on, but I did.

I had her, by one ankle—and the rest of Mrs. Richey, senseless now, and motionless, was over the side of the ledge....I grasped for all I was worth. With both hands I held on, my teeth tight, cursing the way my coat bound me under the armpits....For the first few moments, I could only stare, eyes bulging, at the body that hung limp in my grasp...probably in a faint....

I tried then, to pull her upward. I couldn't. I couldn't get grasp enough on anything, to pull with sufficient weight. I gave up; crying and talking at her—just as if she could hear me. I gave up. But I still had the ankle....

At the top of my voice I screamed. I screamed over and over....The wind rushed into my mouth, and I felt like screaming in a nightmare when no sound comes....But I went on screaming—calling for help....

My arm began to ache....I could feel my coat give. Thank God. With every stitch wrenched, it was easier to hang on....

What if my arm went to sleep? What if I dared to look out at the distance below? What if I got dizzy—or if I fainted....

I couldn't faint. I couldn't get dizzy....

I could hear myself moaning. I didn't even try to scream. I just put all my strength into holding her. The wind blew against me, and I hunched my shoulders toward it....The wind blew the skirts of Mrs. Richey's clothes, and made her body sway....The stone ridge of the huge railing was cutting against my wrist....I couldn't hold her. I must hold her. I mustn't let go. If she went, I'd go. I'd have to go. I wanted to go. What if she were dead already? What if she started to wriggle or fight?...

It is impossible to explain or describe the time that followed. I only remember that after a time I was *sure* I could hold on. My hat had blown away, my hair was whipping about my face, and the cold was creeping up my skirts....But I had only one thought—*to hold on!* I didn't try to

call for help any more. Braced against the stone ledge, I merely held, with all my strength. And finally in spite of the cold, I was perspiring as if I were in a Turkish bath — with my teeth dug into my lips, and every vestige of strength given to my hands....

I only know I cried out when I heard a voice yelling behind me — centuries later — the running of feet, and two figures rushing to either side of me....

A man, waiting for a bus, on the other side of Riverside Drive, had seen — and realized that somebody was in a desperate plight....He had rushed over and into the building, rousing the entire lobby, and coming up with the elevator boy....The children's nurse, Miss Bush, had let them in at the insistent ringing of the doorbell, and she too was with them — standing against the wall, and watching with horror; — which she takes great delight in describing to this day....She had never heard my screams! She had been busy with Nanny, and never dreamed of the excitement that was going on so close to her....

When I finally gained consciousness that night, and recognized Dr. Watchell standing over me, I couldn't understand where I was. I heard his voice speaking quietly to me, with that stern, sharp undertone that marked the man's manner. I knew enough to realize that it was a doctor — and that I must do what he told me.

He must have given me something to put me to sleep. It was almost noon the next day when I woke up, to lie, puzzled at the aches of my body, and at the beauty of the

blue and gray bedroom where I found myself. Only the blue sheets and the soft downy blue comforter gave me an inkling . . . Richey!

I lay, pleased just to be quiet and think. Remembering gradually, at first, and then with a streak of horrified clarity. . . . I tried to get up on my elbow, and sank back again with a groan. Coughing — and wishing the cough wouldn't hurt.

Mrs. Maxwell must have heard me cough. She came bustling in, and greeted me ( doctor's orders, be damned ) with the crooning and affectionate coaxing that she might give to a child — or to a member of her family. I must keep quiet, lamb; says she. She knew just what to do. . . . I asked her if Mrs. Richey were all right. She said yes. After that, I let her do what she pleased.

For some time I was in that blue and gray bedroom, petted and pampered like I was a lap dog. Mrs. Richey evidently insisted that I have a twenty-four-hour nurse. I never had a nurse attend me in my life, and I wasn't going to start. She was a nice girl, though, named Black, who was tickled silly at taking care of me — and being able to act to the others as if she knew *all* about it. *She* was a first-hand gossip for the hospital gang. Besides, I didn't want to rout her. It was a nice easy job, and the poor girl needed it. I let her stay. But Mrs. Maxwell made it her life's work to watch over me. It was she who cooked me broths, and she who wanted to rub me — even offering

me, on the quiet, some of the medicine *I* had given *her* "because it is *so* miraculous for the nerves!"

I wasn't really hurt. I was utterly exhausted and sapped of vitality. Not only that awful night, but the past three months had left me glad to lie still and not want to do a thing.

Mrs. Richey, however, was in a far more serious condition. The front of her head had been badly knocked and cut, and required five stitches. The ligaments of her leg were strained and torn — and her heart had been greatly affected. After all, the woman had been an alcoholic for the past seven months, and her condition was miserable aside from her particular mental upheaval over all that had happened.

Dr. Watchell continued his care of the children. And Dr. Ranger took over the care of the rest of us. I was no problem; but Mrs. Richey was a serious case. Juanita, within a week, was sent off, under the care of Mrs. Maxwell, to a private sanitarium just outside of New York. That house was no place for the frightened child under the circumstances.

After about two weeks, I was up and about. Going in to visit the kids, and delighting in the improvement that they showed. Desney, particularly, thrilled me. She didn't know exactly what had happened, but she knew I was "sick." Her feeble efforts to pat my head, her thin-voiced concern, made me feel almost as if I had folks of my own — who cared.

There was one person who seemed to care. And that

was Mortie. He shadowed that apartment like a detective, and got into my room to see me as often as he could. He had all sorts of plans. We were going to get married and go on a honeymoon where I could rest and he could take care of me. No? Well, then he was going to take me far, far away from everything that looked like a bandage. And fix me up in some swank place and let me get well enough to consider saying yes for a change....

It was he who told me of the enormous excitement down at the St. George about my "heroism." One of *their* girls —capable of a stunt like that! They were thrilled and proud. They got more thrilled and proud each day, it seemed, until at last Dr. Beaston, from his sick bed, had made a suggestion and the others had gleefully caught at the idea and gone to Miss Dillon with it. They wanted to present me with a medal!

And evidently Miss Dillon had agreed!

When Mortie left, I turned over in the bed. Nobody but Miss Dillon knew of my disgrace. Yet Miss Dillon agreed to let them give me a medal! Probably because Dr. Beaston started the movement....A medal! A medal from the St. George — where once, in another lifetime, I tried to get in, and stood in the vestibule crying... where I hurried with aching feet through the shiny silent corridors, carrying trays and scrubbing instruments and watching all my superiors with beating heart and submissive eyes ...where I fainted twice at the operating table....A medal from the alumni of the St. George — where I had come up

from nothing and where I would probably be a legend from now on....

And yet, I was still disgraced! Because of a man with rotten degenerate habits who had attacked a child, and left her poor little mind maimed and distorted for life....I had dared to put that man in jail. I had been fired from my case, and another woman was taking care of the two kids that meant as much to me, if not more, than to their mother....I was to be suspended from the hospital that was to honor me....

I wasn't actually crying. The tears just trickled through —like they do when you're very tired....

Mrs. Richey asked to see me before I left.

I was warned not to talk to her any more than I could help—and I didn't.

She was a pathetic sight. In her huge canopied bed, between ivory satin sheets. Her forehead where she had been stitched circled with a bandage—like a white halo of pain and suffering around the childish head.

She reached out a hand to me. And started to cry. The nurse who attended her suggested that I leave immediately. Letitia Richey wasn't supposed to cry. It wasn't good for her to cry.

But Mrs. Richey kept hold of my hand and threw an appealing look behind her tears at the nurse.

"I wish you wouldn't leave," she said.

I didn't answer. I just pressed her cold fingers.

"I know you have to go—to take care of yourself....

I don't know how to thank you.... I'm glad I didn't die.... I have so much to do. I never understood, you see. You believe that, don't you?"

"Of course," I nodded awkwardly. "Of course, you didn't know half that was going on. Please keep quiet, now, Mrs. Richey."

"If only you had told me—" she labored through her chattering teeth. "Somebody should have told me—before it was too late...."

"It isn't too late," I bent over her because she kept pulling at me so. "The babies are going to be all right, Mrs. Richey.... And if only you'll take care of *yourself*—"

She drew in a painful breath. Her hand tugged at me until I had to sit beside her on the bed....

"I'll—never touch a drop—again," she vowed, the tears rolling down her cheeks. "You don't think I mean that maybe. But I won't.... I'll never be a bad mother again...."

"The kids want you so. It's wonderful, Mrs. Richey, to be wanted like that."

She bobbed her head in agreement, and fumbled for a handkerchief.

"I'm through with all of them," she said, as if she were repeating a litany. "It was—the money. I can see that. I know it, now. That's all—they cared—about me!"

Mrs. Richey's nurse touched me on the shoulder. Her head jerked toward the door, and I started to rise.

"It does me good to talk, nurse," Mrs. Richey pleaded,

her voice more normal. "I've been wanting to say this — to somebody...."

"Very well, Mrs. Richey," the nurse relented. "But only for a few moments. We don't want a temperature."

"No," agreed Letitia anxiously. "No. No, I don't want a temperature. I must get well. I must do things."

She closed her eyes again, squeezing out the last few tears. Then she sniffled, and her lips quivered. Her hand was still tight on mine. Presently she opened her blue eyes and looked urgently at me.

"I just wanted you to know," she said slowly. "So you won't hate me."

"Of course I don't. Please — Mrs. Richey. You'll have me crying too...."

"I wrote it all to Nell," she confided proudly. "That's — Mrs. Maxwell, you know. Stella wrote the letter for me. I told her how — ashamed I was...."

I looked down at her hand.

"She sent me a beautiful letter. Would you like to read it?"

From under her satin pillow she dragged forth a crumpled envelope, the top edge ragged and torn....

I shook my head.

"Please — no, thank you," I insisted gently.

"She told me news in it," the voice quivering again. "Bad news that is really good, I suppose.... About Juanita."

"Juanita? Is she — all right?"

"She's had —" the eyes filled with tears again, and her voice broke. "Juanita's had a— She's pretty — sick. But

they say she's going to be — all right.... Oh, my poor little Juanita! I remember her when she was just a tiny... Oh, that Nick! That unspeakable beast! I'll hound him to his grave.... Death is too good for him.... I'll never stop until..."

The nurse tapped me sharply on the shoulder. This time I was glad to get up swiftly. Mrs. Richey's hand loosened her grasp. Her sobs were like the out-and-out bawling of a baby.... They made me shiver.... They reminded me of the nights Nanny woke up with bad dreams....

I looked down on her. Her palms were pressed into her eyes, and her knees were doubled upright with the spasm of weeping....

I glanced at the nurse. Her face was grim — and helpless.

"Better go," she suggested.

I crossed the rose-colored boudoir and went out into the corridor, wondering why I couldn't cry. Slowly I went back to my blue and gray room, and packed what things I had. I got dressed, and put on the caracul coat, that nobody had thought to have mended under the armpits.... I didn't mind. It would do until I took a cab home....

For the last time I went in to see Nanny and Desney. Miss Bush, their nurse, was as whole-souled and kind to me as if she were my sister. She took me inside and showed me the charts — and the improvements. Desney had gained four pounds, and Nanny's blood was clearing.... She was able to take nourishment normally. Dr. Watchell came every day.

Miss Bush tried to pump me, but I was too tight inside to talk. She was kind enough not to press me.

Nanny was asleep. Not for anything would I have disturbed her. I stood over her bed and looked down on the little form. Her cheeks were not so drawn, nor the skin so pale and bluish.... She breathed regularly, and made no noises as she slept.... The thin little profile with its nose snubbed against the pink pillowcase looked like a caricature of her mother's naïve beauty.... A lump came to my throat.

I bent down and kissed her lightly on the forehead. She didn't even stir in her sleep.

"Good-bye, Nanny," I whispered.

Then I went out, with the nurse, to the roof terrace, where Desney sat in her wheelchair, bundled in the sun; her teddy-bear in the crook of her arm, and a bright chirpy look in her eyes.

She called out at the sight of me.

I mumbled some kind of good-bye, explaining that I was going away for a rest. I bent down and kissed her over and over. Her arms went tightly about my neck....

"Good-bye, dear Miss Hart," she kept repeating. "You will come back to us soon, won't you? When you're all better. You mustn't be sick, you know. It's awful to be sick. But it isn't so awful when you have Dr. Watchell. I like Dr. Watchell, don't you? Nanny likes him too. Dr. Ranger is all right, but he doesn't bring us surprises in his pocket, like Dr. Watchell. He brought me a rubber frog yesterday. It doesn't squeak, but it floats. I'd like to give it to you,

for your bathtub. Would you like to have it, Miss Hart?"

She had fumbled for it under her blankets and produced it with the triumph of a magician.

"I'd love to have it, Desney. I need one for my bathtub."

"I'll tell Nanny. She'll be glad. Mummy's getting better. Did you hear? Dr. Watchell says so. And when she's better she's coming in to see us. Every day!"

"That's wonderful."

"You better get well, too, Miss Hart. And then come to see us — every day. We'll have a lot of things growing in our window boxes. I planted radishes yesterday. I planted some for Nanny in her box, too, because she isn't big enough to plant by herself. When you come, we'll have some radishes for you."

I patted her cheek and smiled.

"Maybe we won't be here, though, when you come," Desney's face clouded. "Because Mummy is going to take us to the country. Very soon. Dr. Watchell says so. We may go even before Mummy gets well. And then she'll come to us as soon as she can."

"Oh, I'm so glad. Where in the country, Desney?"

"I don't know yet. But some place nice. Dr. Watchell says so. Just as soon as spring comes, and that isn't far away. March 21st is spring. Did you know that, Miss Hart?"

"No. Is it, Desney?"

"Sure. Dr. Watchell says so. And he says we can have a little dog later, if we're good and do everything he says for us to do. And we are good, aren't we, Miss Bush?"

She turned to the other nurse, who agreed volubly.

"Well, bye-bye, Desney," I managed, and stooped over again, to feel her cheek against mine.

"Bye, darling Miss Hart. Ooo! Golly heck! Look! Your coat is all torn!"

When I got down the elevator, and out of that apartment, I stood on the corner, waiting for a taxi. I felt a little strange and giddy — being out. I was glad when a taxi came, and slowed up at my signal. The driver opened the door, and put in my bag. He asked me where? I hesitated.

Where? I didn't know where. I didn't want to go back to the apartment with Finch. I didn't want to go to a hotel room alone. Where?

The driver looked at me and coughed.

"Take me," I said suddenly, "to some place I can phone. And then wait."

"Sure. Up on Broadway," he decided, and climbed back to his seat.

I sat back, and I could feel the cold of the leather seat right through my clothes. I hate taxis with leather seats, in winter. They are like an ice box; and you slip and slide when they turn the corners fast....I like plush seats....

We drew up with a jerk in front of a United Cigar Store. I got out, and fumbled for a nickel. I called Mortie's number, and thanked my God in heaven when he answered....Not until I heard his voice did I realize.... *I had never thought of calling Lester!*

Never even thought of calling Lester! And yet I loved

Lester so! I had always loved Lester, since the first day I met him.... No, I *didn't* love Lester. How could I? Why should I? He was just one of those dreams — one of those things that you read about and wish could come true.... With his pale dreamy face, and his self-sufficient air, and his haughty, quiet, soft-spoken ways.... Just a romantic idea....

All this flashed through my mind as I heard Mortie's voice call "Hello" at the other end....

All this and more — because our thoughts have such a way of flashing whole worlds of news to our dumb spirits in a moment of time.... Mortie's voice saying "Hello —" sending a thrill of gladness and peace through me... a feeling of being at home — of having some one to...

Mortie, the rough-neck, that couldn't make a living without breaking the law.... Yet he *might* make a living without breaking the law. There must be some way.... Mortie, with freckles, and a stocky prize-fighter figure — and naughty blue eyes that didn't give a damn how you liked it.... Mortie, who carried a gun around in his car, and made transactions on side streets and only took cash; and had any number of bank accounts in any number of banks.... Mortie, who went around getting shot in the left thigh... and who knew men who would bump somebody off for a couple of hundred dollars....

But I loved him! I loved the voice that said "Hello" just when I needed so badly to be hello-ed....

He had stood by me, and was ready to stand by me no

matter what came or went. He cared. He wanted to be my *folks.*

"Hello?" he said again impatiently.

"Hello. That you, Mortie?" I called softly.

"*Lora!* Where in hell are you?"

"Mortie!" I closed my eyes in that dirty foul smelling phone booth, and pressed my lips against the receiver. "I'm at a cigar store on Broadway and 87th Street. Would you please come and get me?"

"Be there before you can blow your nose!"

He hung up, without a good-bye. He was tearing into his coat and hat — to come to me.

I went back to the taxi and climbed in. The man was moody at my request to wait. I sat back in the cab and clasped my hands so tight that they gave me comfort....

Was I crazy? Maybe I just thought I loved Mortie because I needed him so. Because I knew that he was driving like a fool across the city to get me... sneaking by the red lights, like he always did, and outwitting the traffic stops by going half way down a block, turning and running up the other side, in order to steal a cross-town street....

He wasn't any hero. He wasn't the kind whose picture you'd hang and point out to the girls with a thrilling matter-of-course....

Before I got through thinking — he came. And I looked at him with new and puzzled eyes. He didn't seem to notice. Too gleeful that I had called him. Taking command. Paying off the taxi driver and giving him a tip

he wouldn't forget. Elbowing me over to his own car.

Not until we were seated side by side — as usual — in his own car, did he turn to me.

"I got an idea," he said with an air of high finality. "I know just where you're to stay, and get back some of your Old Man Guts. I've got it all decided, and you're not to object. I won't listen to a word."

I smiled at him, as he dug his heel in the self-starter and threw in his clutch. I wasn't going to object. I was too happy that somebody had decided for me — where I should go.

He drove me to Coney Island. And got me a room facing the water at the Half Moon Hotel. A room and bath. He saw me as far as the room, eyeing it critically, and passing judgment. Then we went down to the dining-room, and had a big meal.

"Here's where you'll get health," he mouthed as he munched a hot buttered roll. "Good salt air, and a place to walk off the blues. And best of all, you'll be near enough so that I can run down any time I take it into my head. See? So you won't be lonesome."

"I think it's swell, Mortie. You're a darling."

"You've come as far as thinking I'm a darling? Like I was a puppy dog? You're damn right I'm a darling. I'm more than that. I'm the kind of man you need. Maybe you'll come to realize that some day. I'm trying to be awfully patient. But, God, you're dense!"

I laughed. The food was grand. And I was beginning to feel young again.

"Now," he decided, when he pushed back his peach melba at last, "you write out a list of all the junk you need from your apartment. I'll go up and get it for you, and drive down here with it. Finch will enjoy having me rummaging through the closets and bureau drawers. I love Finch. She tickles me."

"Give Finch my love," I said.

"What a chance!" he exploded. "If I get any of it I'll keep it myself. Did you know that good old mug-face is going to marry her big badge and number man?"

"Finch is going to marry Jack Doogan?"

"Yep. That ought to set an example to you. You won't have any more roommate. You've got to have a roommate eventually, Lora. And it might as well be me."

I laughed because he expected me to. I wished he'd be romantic. If he'd say the same things—and be just a little bit romantic....

"Well," I said as I sugared his coffee for him, "I suppose Finch hasn't Vivian to worry about any more, and now she's going to take on Jack Doogan."

"When she marries that cop, I'm going to send them a case of champagne."

"She'd rather have the money," I grinned.

Finch did come down to see me, a few nights later, and told me all about it. At thirty-five Finch was far more flushed and coy than Vivian ever could be. Fortunately her romance was uppermost in her mind. It was easier to keep switching the subject off the Richey affair....

But Finch went with me, two weeks later, to the St. George, where in the big reception room of the nurses' home, I was presented with my medal from the Alumni. Mortie was with me too. Miss Dillon was awfully kind. She made a beauiful speech about my entire record. Never mentioning the time I gave a wrong hypo to a kidney case, or the trouble I was about to face over the chauffeur I had put in jail, and insisted upon appearing against....

Later, I went up to Dr. Beaston's room, and showed him my medal. He shook hands with me, and patted me on the back and called me "Good girl." Then he made me sit beside his bed. He looked so unlike the Beaston I had always worshiped. His face was pale and thin—and the huge cast that stiffened his right side seemed ungainly and weird....

He talked normally and insisted upon smoking a cigarette. He wanted to know about the chauffeur business. I told him about it. What little he didn't know already. Then he began to talk gravely, asking me why I wanted to press such a charge and put myself through such a disagreeable mess. What was the use? And what would it get me? I said it would get me nothing but a reputation for being a meddler. But I didn't think such a man should be allowed to get away with a crime like that. I said I thought it worse than murder, and I just couldn't erase the horror from my mind. I didn't seem able to let the matter drop.

Mr. Phillip Richey, he said, had been over to visit Dr.

Beaston. He had asked Beaston to use his influence with me. He had even offered any sort of retribution.... Finally, Mr. Richey had insisted that if I went through with the charge, he would persecute me in my profession to the end of my days.

"Of course, he won't!" Beaston added calmly. "That's just the ragings of a man who has his own foot in the gutter. He won't, because he's already lost his hold on Letitia Richey, and he's pretty much on the outside with the whole business. He's just trying to threaten you if he can't bribe you. I'm only telling you what he said, that's all. I wouldn't worry about Mr. Richey, Lora. It isn't that. But I do think you're cutting off your nose to spite your face. I do think you ought to consider the matter carefully. After all, it will get all over town. And you know how things spread in the medical profession. Nobody will want you on an important case. They will feel you'll try to run the whole works, and butt in where you're not wanted. They just won't ever trust you the same again. Now, look! You've been honored by your hospital! Honored — and rightly so — for the magnificent work you've done!"

"I know," I nodded. "And I'm proud. And if anybody could make me change my mind, you could, Dr. Beaston."

He tried to punch his pillow into a more comfortable position. I got up and fixed it for him, and took his cigarette away to douse it.

"Well," I said at last, "I'll think about it."

I did think about it. A lot. And Dr. Beaston's words thumped over and over in my mind. Dr. Beaston was right. Of course he was right.... Except...

Except that I had one shrill unforgettable memory that kept ringing in my ears and topping everything else... making me tremble with fury and outrage every time I thought of it.... The cry of horror and torture in Juanita's voice when she had thrown herself on me, and gasped out the whole story,—holding on to me with fingers nervous with an animal terror... burying her face in my shoulder, and trembling uncontrollably....

I couldn't fight down that memory. I couldn't quiet my emotions when I thought of it—merely by saying "Oh, let it go!" I just couldn't. I was venomous and vitriolic enough to want to see that man punished to the last measure.... If I could have lynched him myself, I might have felt quieted....

Mortie saw that there was something on my mind.

One night we sat on a boardwalk bench in Coney Island, with his motor-robe around both our feet, and salty March wind in our faces.

We were talking of Mona, who had just been taken to the hospital. She had honest-to-god pains, and we were hopeful that her baby might be early enough not to cause an uproar. Her poor husband, out on the road, was wiring her to the hospital every few hours. Mona had been a naughty girl and fed herself a big potion of castor oil in the hopes of hurrying things. Now, she was in for it.

Mortie, excited and tense over the whole business, had

just come from visiting her. He had seen another baby in the hospital. One only a week old that had been brought in to show Mona.... Mortie had been very impressed at the sight of it. He had never seen an infant before. "Cute little gadget," he called it; hoping that Mona's would be better looking, however....

From there we went on talking and finally he probed me. He knew something was on my mind.

I told him. How Beaston had talked to me, and how very right I knew he was. And yet how that memory of Juanita's voice haunted me, and how I couldn't feel calm at the thought of it. My blood froze with the mere knowledge of such a man....

"Listen," said Mortie, pulling his cap back to front so the wind would leave him in peace. "It's a hell of an ordeal for you to go through, Lora. But if you're game, I'm for it. And I'll appear against him too. The lousy bastard. He *ought* to be sent up for forty years. To a place where they feed him saltpeter. It'll do him good."

I looked at him. His freckled face was white and earnest in the moonlight, and his jowls almost shook with the same vindictive emotion I felt myself.

"I'm glad you think that way, Mortie," I said. "That settles it. I'll go through with it. No matter what it costs."

"I'll see it won't cost you anything—but time."

"It'll cost me my reputation," I explained for the tenth time. "I'm suspended from the St. George already. I'll probably be barred from there."

"For which I'll be thoroughly thankful," breathed Mortie,

his arm stealing around me. "I think you've had about enough of that messy business, Lora. Why don't you give up nursing? You've put in nearly eleven years of helping people, and I think you're swell. But folks ought to know when to quit."

"Mortie," I said reminiscently. "About four months ago, I thought so myself. I said I'd never be a nurse again!"

He sat up with a jerk.

"You did? Why, I thought you were *married* to the damn business."

"I was. But it's a hard-working husband!"

"I can offer you a substitute. I'd like to be your *second* husband, Lora. You know I love you. So much I can hardly stand it. I love you, Lora."

"You never said that before."

"Good God Almighty," he spluttered. "Can you only understand words of one syllable?"

"I guess so. Tell me again, Mortie."

"I love you so much I'd give up bootlegging for you. I'd let you have a ten months' baby like Mona. I'd—"

"Never mind, Mortie. I'm convinced!"

So Mortie and I got married on the day that Mona produced her "cute little gadget" and named it after the fine little man who rushed back from Milwaukee to greet his new son....

We've been living at the Half Moon. Waiting until the case comes up against Nick. We're going through with it. And it doesn't matter any more ( except way down deep )

if they bar me from all the hospitals in the world....

After the case comes up, Mortie is going to take me on a honeymoon. We're going to be gone for five months on a trip round the world. Mortie has it all planned out. He says he has enough stacked by to retire now. Though he'll be interested in sampling a few good bets in the foreign liquor markets as we go about.

Yesterday, he went up for me, and returned to Mrs. Richey the watch from Udall and Ballous that I had kept in my safety deposit box. Mrs. Richey wanted to give me the watch, but Mortie refused. I haven't been up to talk to Mrs. Richey. What's the use? I'd like to see the kids, but they've been taken to California where their father had a second house right on the sea.

That's too far for me to go to visit them. It's funny how a nurse never really belongs to the family she has cared for, no matter how attached she may feel. When your work is over, their life goes on, and you're really no part of it. I get bits of news about the Richeys from Dr. Watchell and Miss Bush, who writes me and tells me that the kids are walking around now, and playing on the sand....

I shall meet Mrs. Richey again — at the trial, for she has sworn to appear against Nick along with me. I'll probably see Mr. Phil Richey for the first time then — and I'll enjoy the fancy wriggling he'll have to do to keep his skirts clean of the whole affair. Meanwhile, Dr. Watchell tells me that Mrs. Richey has gone to join Juanita, and Mrs. Maxwell. Mrs. Maxwell is going straight out to the coast,

to the kids, and Mrs. Richey and Juanita will join her there after the trial is all over.

At any rate, I don't care very much any more about any of them — except little Nanny and Desney. I have a new life to lead now, and I can gather it will be a fairly busy one.

One thing — the kids are going to have the thrill of getting mail regularly. I'm going to send them a postal card from every foreign port that Mortie and I land in during our honeymoon.

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